Football FA Cup final: Arsenal 2 Newcastle 0

Red-hot Arsenal earn Double distinction

David Lacey at Wembley

THIS time the FA Cup followed the league championship to Highbury at the double. There have been more distinguished Wembley triumphs, but it is hard to remember a final being won with the sheer pace of Arsenal's victory over Newcastle last Saturday, or a success that owed so much to the contribution of a single player, in this case Ray Parlour.

Unless Glenn Hoddle changes his mind, Parlour will not make even the outer fringes of the England World Cup squad. To the uninitiated, after this performance, the Arsenal man's early exclusion from Hoddle's plans will be as deep a mystery as the continued involvement in them of Newcastle's Robert Lee.

Like David Batty, another England medium-pacer, Lee put in 90 minutes of honest toil on a stifling afternoon, but apart from Batty ruffling Patrick Vieira early on with a jarring tackle there was little to halt Arsenal's progress to a second Double. Parlour became the dominating influence as Newcastle's midfield was increasingly outflanked and outrun. It had Speed but no pace.

The goals said it all. Marc Overmars, released by a scoop from Emmanuel Petit, outstripped Alessandro Pistone for the first after 23 minutes; Nicolas Anelka, set up by Parlour's pass, outran Steve Howey for the second after 69. Towards the end, Kenny Dalglish's heavy-legged Newcastle players were reduced to going through the motions.

English's football's eighth Double, and its fourth in 13 seasons, had never been in serious doubt. Realistically the only points at issue were whether Arsène Wenger's side could reproduce at Wembley the quality of football which had accompanied their surge to the title and, if so, what fresh means Newcastle could find to stop them.

The answer was that, given the opposition's manifold limitations, Arsenal played only as well as they needed to in the heat. There were times, particularly in the first half, when their passing became uncharacteristically slipshod and, though Anelka coped well enough without the assistance of the unfit Dennis Bergkamp, the spectacle would have benefited from the Dutchman's cultured presence.

Wenger, already assured of a place in English football history by becoming the first foreign manager to take a team to the championship, now has a bar to go with his distinguished service medal. A long and lucrative contract at Highbury should be his for the taking, the Champions League less so.

It is 12 years since Kenny Dalglish helped Liverpool beat Everton in the FA Cup final to secure the Double as a player-manager. A week earlier he had scored the goal at Chelsea which returned the league championship to Anfield from Goodison. How far away all this seemed as a Newcastle side shorn of the idiosyncratic but beguiling talents of Kevin Keegan's team trundled into action along predictable lines, like trams caught up in a Formula One race.

Though the performance was nowhere near as abject as the supine response of Joe Harvey's team to Liverpool's bewildering patterns of passing and movement in the 1974 final, Newcastle's followers went home feeling more disgruntled than ever.

Dalglish's success in management at Liverpool and Blackburn is a matter of record, but the further his playing days fall behind him the more cautious he becomes. Pistone and Warren Barton were supposed to gang up on Overmars, but the opening goal destroyed that plan. Meanwhile the ease with which Parlour continually sped past Stuart Pearce became an embarrassment. Yet Newcastle did not try to carry the game to Arsenal until the match was more than half lost, and Dalglish's substitutions were mere afterthoughts.

The absence of an unfit Keith Gillespie condemned Alan Shearer to a Cup final without crosses. The England striker spent much of his time in lone and fruitless confrontations with Martin Keown and Tony Adams, getting himself cautioned for a late lunge on the latter at the end of the first half.

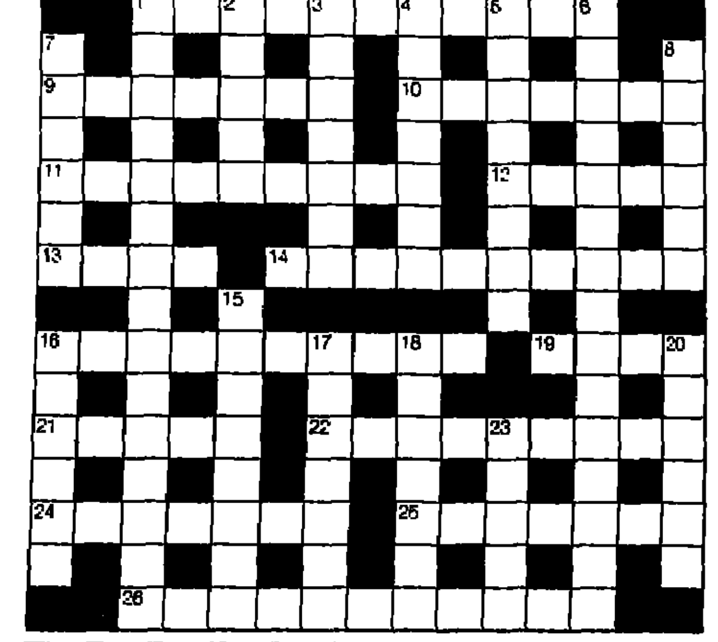
The one moment of pure Shearer came in the 65th minute, courtesy of Keown treading on the ball. Shearer's speed of reaction was breathtaking as he moved across the defender before whipping a left-foot shot beyond the reach of David Seaman, only to see the ball cannon back off the inside of the far post.

Two minutes earlier Nico Dabizas, Newcastle's Greek centre-back, had headed a free-kick from Lee against the Arsenal bar. Four minutes later Anelka put the outcome beyond whatever doubt might still have lingered on.



Up for the Cup . . . Skipper Tony Adams lifts the trophy at Wembley PHOTO: DARREN ...

Cryptic crossword by Rover



Across

1 Ball-girls who miss the trip? (11)
9 Barnacle Bill, perhaps (7)
10 It could clear the ball (3-4)
11 With character (9)
12 What the gondolier did with quiet song (5)
13 Nobleman in Pearly King's court (4)
14 Meet her of great potential (10)
16 Comedians making a big hit (10)
19 On safari, keeps at a distance (4)
21 What Romulus called his guardian constellation (5)
22 How a gully ran uneasily? (9)
24 Contemporary stage (7)
25 Keep quiet about trip up raised walk (7)
26 Timberline in novelist's state of repose (11)

Down

1 Cheeky kids who steal fish in person (15)
2 Coleridge was one who played for Surrey and England (5)
3 Mix-up when old Welsh boxer has a turn (7)
4 Outstanding, like some one expecting too much? (7)
5 Type of cultured Mex. pearl (8)
6 Normal on Frank (15)
7 Way out of the Maze? (6)
8 A spinner whose pride's hurt (6)
15 Philosopher arouses new University (8)
16 Religious leader spilling pail in church (6)
17 Refuse, but put up chance to win something (4-3)
18 Beggar missing his first boat (7)
20 "My herd's astray!": Bo' Peep and sheep did (6)
23 Sailor caught harbouring a poet (5)

Last week's solution

Scottish Cup final: Heart of Midlothian 2 Rangers 1

Stout Hearts win the day

Patrick Glenn at Celtic Park

WITH the votes already in, Jim Jefferies did not have to win the cup to be named Bell's Manager of the Year. But steering Hearts to their first trophy in almost four decades was exhilarating vindication of the panellists' judgment.

Jefferies was presented with the award at the annual dinner of the Scottish Football Writers' Association last Sunday, but it did not compare with the elation induced by his beloved club's achievement the day before.

"I knew nothing would compare with this," said Jefferies after Hearts won the cup the first time since 1956; their last trophy of any kind had been the League Cup of 1962.

It was Jefferies's husbanding of meagre means which brought him recognition from the media as well as triumph in the cup.

Jefferies's extraordinary exploitation of the Bosman ruling — he signed the Frenchmen Gilles Rousset and Stephane Adam, Stefano Salvatori from Italy, and Thomas Flogel from Austria — has allowed the club's directors to complete Tynecastle's redevelopment. Hearts are still in debt, but the progress they have made in the past two years has been phenomenal and their prospects, including an increase in season-ticket sales, give them a chance of achieving financial stability that they have not enjoyed since the seventies.

Walter Smith, the outgoing Rangers manager, was not helped by the suspension of Jorg Albertz, the injury to Jonas Thern and the transfer to Middlesbrough of Paul Gascoigne, which stripped away his first-choice midfield.

He was left with such players as Stuart McCall, Ian Ferguson and Rino Gattuso, who are not celebrated for their creativity. Ian Durrant replaced McCall midway through the second half, but by then the Edinburgh side were 2-0 up and the cup was being decorated with maroon-and-white ribbons.

Colin Cameron converted a penalty awarded after only 38 seconds when Ferguson tripped Steve Fulton. In the 52nd minute Adam brushed past the somnolent Lorenzo Amoruso to collect Rousset's long ball from a free-kick and drive it over the line off the goalkeeper Andy Goram.

Ally McCoist, who had replaced Staale Stensaas at half-time, pulled a goal back with eight minutes left, but it was Rangers' only impact on a stout Hearts defence.

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The Washington Post Le Monde

China puts brave face on HK poll setback

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

WHEN Asia's longest-serving ruler stepped to the microphone in Jakarta's Merdeka Palace last week to bow to an unstoppable momentum for change, Chinese television screens carrying the pictures from CNN suddenly went blank. A fuzzy fog enveloped the live satellite images of President Suharto's surrender.

More threatening to leaders in Beijing, though, may be the images that flashed across the big electronic screens in the Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Centre on Monday. They gave the final results of the first democratic election held on Chinese territory since the 1949 revolution.

Instead of concealing the vote, China's official media celebrated it. Indeed, the official New China News Agency (Xinhua) scooped even Hong Kong's electoral commission to announce a turnout of 53 per cent in last Sunday's poll.

In a city supposedly uninterested in politics, nearly 1.5 million people braved torrential rains to vote. The turnout not only confounded Hong Kong pundits but challenged the core principles of so-called Asian values — an authoritarian creed already jettisoned in South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and most recently Indonesia, but still embraced in Beijing.

"People in the rest of China will be thinking, 'If Hong Kong can have such an open election, why not us?'" said Andrew Cheng, a leader of the Democratic party. "I don't think 'one country, two systems' can really work in the long run. We are all Chinese. Why should Hong Kong have free elections but not the mainland?"

The mainland media gave extensive coverage to the turmoil in Indonesia while barely mentioning the peaceful protests of students whose occupation of the parliament in Jakarta revived uncomfortable memories of the Chinese students who occupied Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Democratic reforms in Taiwan have been treated with much the same contempt. When the island held its first real presidential election in March 1996, China responded by testing ballistic missiles nearby.

As Hong Kong's master, however, Beijing has had to applaud a process that, while far from fully democratic, would mark a revolution if it were extended from the 6.4 million people living in Britain's former colony to the 1.2 billion in mainland China.

"I hope that China will learn that democratic elections . . . do not necessarily lead to chaos, do not necessarily lead to confrontation between the elected assembly and the government, do not necessarily make political parties adopt a short-sighted populist line," said Tsang Yok-shing, leader of the main pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong.

Mr Tsang scraped to victory in Kowloon West. Ironically, his victory, along with that of a handful of other pro-Beijing candidates who dared to stand for directly elected seats, may sharpen Beijing's unease. China will find it more difficult to dismiss an election won by some of its supporters.

Compared with Hong Kong's previous election in 1995, last Sunday's poll was in some ways a step backwards. It was less democratic than the last British-supervised poll, held under an electoral system devised by the governor, Chris Patten.

With Mr Patten gone and his reforms scrapped, Hong Kong retreated to a system in which 40 of the 60 members of the legislative council were chosen by small groups of professionals and an electoral college stacked with pro-Beijing stalwarts.

The big winners in the 20 contests in which universal suffrage applied were the Democratic party and its allies. Their success, though, was more than offset by the strength of their opponents in the so-called "functional constituencies". While the Democratic party leader, Martin Lee, won a seat with 143,843 votes, an insurance broker secured a "functional constituency" seat with 94 votes.

Such unfairness outraged Hong Kong democrats and provoked a demand for all members to be directly elected in future. Even pro-China candidates such as Mr Tsang voiced unease.

China, and the man it appointed to run Hong Kong, the shipping tycoon Tung Chee-hwa, have made it clear that they will resist attempts to speed up the pace of democratic reform outlined in the Basic Law, a constitution scripted by Beijing. A bigger headache for China, though, will be calls in other parts of the country for a taste of what Hong Kong already has.

"The presence of Hong Kong as a free and open society within Chinese territory . . . has a tremendous impact on China," said Albert Ho, another Democratic party victor.

"People here speak their mind without fear . . . Across the Shenzhen river there are so many prohibitions. People will ask: why the difference?"

Comment, page 12

Asian values under attack . . . Students in Indonesia celebrate after President Suharto bowed to pressure and stood down after ruling his country for 32 years *(see story, page 3)* PHOTO: CHOO YOU-KONG

Arms row follows Ulster's Yes vote

John Mullin

DAVID TRIMBLE, leader of the Ulster Unionists, signalled the next phase in Northern Ireland's political transformation last Sunday when he demanded a clear pledge from the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, that the IRA was finished with violence for good.

Mr Trimble, buoyed by an impressive 71.1 per cent vote for the Good Friday agreement, said it was vital now that Sinn Fein realised there was neither support nor justification for undemocratic methods. The Yes campaign was backed by at least 95 per cent of nationalists.

Mr Trimble said: "The time has come for Mr Adams to deliver. It could start off with a clear statement that this squalid little war is over; that there is a commitment to peaceful means; that there will be no return to violence."

Northern Ireland voted 71.1 per cent to 28.9 per cent in favour of the agreement, which will involve electing a 108-seat assembly on June 25. Voters in the Irish Republic also overwhelmingly ratified the deal, though they were asked if they agreed to the republic waiving its constitutional claim to the North.

It was the first all-Ireland poll since 1918. The results came on the 200th anniversary of the 1798 rebellion, when Protestant and Catholics joined forces against their English oppressors.

Mr Adams repeated his demands to meet Mr Trimble, who so far has refused to speak to him. The Sinn Fein leader wants to discuss this July's annual Orange march at Drumcree, near Portadown, Co Armagh. He wants Mr Trimble, whose Upper Bann constituency includes Drumcree, to use his influence to stop the Protestant parade.

The march has sparked violent clashes for the past four years as the Orangemen tried to march down the nationalist Garvaghy Road. There are fears that this year will be the worst yet.

Mr Adams refused to talk about decommissioning weapons until after Drumcree. "You talk to me about decommissioning. Talk to me about that after July 12 if these parades go ahead. Talk to me about it after the Tour of the North in Belfast. Talk to me if the RUC hack their way down the Garvaghy Road," Mr Adams said on Sunday.

Mr Trimble, himself an Orangeman, is on weak ground at Drumcree. He won the leadership of the Ulster Unionists in 1995 after his hardline stance in backing the Orangemen's right to march there.

Mr Adams, who said the significance of the peace deal was that the guns were silent, appeared to be attempting to deflect attention from decommissioning of weapons. It is the one issue that threatens the working of the assembly and power-sharing executive. The agreement binds parties only to using their influence to try to ensure all paramilitary weapons are handed in within two years.

Although the deal contains no guarantees, the British and Irish governments have pledged to have decommissioning schemes in force by the end of next month.

Analysis, page 9
Comment, page 12

How they voted

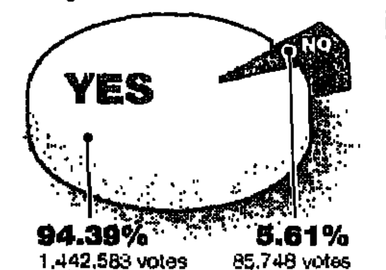
Northern Ireland



71.12% 676,986 votes — 28.88% 274,879 votes

○ Electorate **1,175,403**
○ Turnout **80.98%** (951,845)

Republic of Ireland



94.39% 1,442,583 votes — 5.61% 85,748 votes

○ Electorate **2,749,208**
○ Turnout **55.59%** (1,528,331)

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,600	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Innocent victims of free-market dogma

CONGRATULATIONS to Maggie O'Kane on her moving article on the implications of international debt for the health of the poor in Africa (She is three and suffers from a plague that kills millions — the plague of debt, May 17). I wish the campaign on debt relief every success.

It is worth remembering, though, that demands for debt repayments are not the only assistance that the international financial community offers to the grim reaper in Africa. The structural adjustment programmes that have swept through the continent in the wake of the debt crisis have been characterised by the indiscriminate imposition of free-market dogma. In the health sector this has been nothing short of a disaster.

Liberalisation of pharmaceuticals markets has opened the floodgates for adulterated and fake drugs, for over-the-counter sales of inappropriate medicines, and for self-medication with sub-therapeutic doses. Life-threatening diseases such as malaria are growing more and more resistant to treatments, while essential drug programmes, aiming to ensure rational and cost-effective use of the appropriate generic medicines, have been left in tatters.

Health markets are notoriously inequitable and are being reined in with managed care programmes even in the United States, but at the same time Africans are being forced to see health care increasingly as a financial transaction, with fee-for-services becoming the norm. In Sub-Saharan Africa, hospitals remain empty in precisely those places where they are most needed, because the fees are not affordable. Yet the amounts of money involved are tiny in comparison with military budgets, or the overall debt burden, never mind the volumes of money used to bail out banks over-exposed in Mexico or South Korea.

When will the rich wake up to some of their responsibilities?
Granville Richardson,
Sawston, Cambridge

I WAS pleased to see the Guardian Weekly publish an article that highlights the plight of some of the world's neglected people, in this case Niger. But while it is good to make readers aware of such suffering, the report is not likely to stir up much action among the international organisations. Niger is, unfortunately, among the world's forgotten and neglected countries, long ago abandoned by the colonial powers, devoid of significant natural resources that might be coveted by the multinational companies, and unlikely to be targeted for hi-tech, expensive medicines to treat high-profile diseases.

The result is a shortage of simple medical supplies to treat what are normally controllable infections, together with malnutrition, the cause of the victims' underlying immune deficiency, and a lack of clean water. Yet there are simple solutions to these problems. The amount of money it cost to organise and execute Bill Clinton's useless but much-hyped jaunt through Africa would probably have been enough to fight the diseases discussed in the article. Cancellation of the repayment debt, a ploy used by the superpowers elsewhere to political advantage, would free up valuable funds to spend on a basic health-delivery system, at least in theory.

However, I don't expect much action from these quarters. What about the World Health Organisation and the big aid organisations? They are probably too busy chasing after the fashionable "epidemics" and famines.
Jim Hudson,
Richmond, BC, Canada

THERE is a view that the industrialised states, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank give money to Third World governments which they then spend unwisely or corruptly. The truth is that Third World countries do not actually receive money from First World "donors". Instead, "donor" countries provide loans to Third World countries to pay off earlier debts to "donor" countries. Third World countries do not have use of this money.

Another common aid cycle goes like this: a "donor" persuades a Third World "beneficiary" to accept a loan to pay for a project within the "beneficiary's" borders, the contract for which must be awarded to a company based in the "donor" country. Again the Third World country does not get use of the money.

By these and other means, "loans" never leave "donor" countries; the money is merely recycled among the "donors".
Hosea Jaffe,
London

Chomsky, present and correct

HUGO YOUNG'S subtle assault on Professor Noam Chomsky was both gratuitous and a trifle insidious (Prophet of the left rooted in the past, May 17). If Prof Chomsky's "old, meticulous researches into the inequities of US policy in Guatemala in the 1950s and Cuba in the 1960s continued to form the basis of his case against Washington" — which is probably an unfair assessment, given that Young himself cites the professor's elucidation of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment — it is worth remembering that whereas the means of extending Washington's diktat may have changed somewhat, the subjugatory aims remain the same.

The hypocrisies, prejudices and disinformation against which Prof Chomsky raises his voice are rooted considerably further in the past than his message. While the intellectual left's inability comprehensively to posit a feasible and coherent alternative to capitalism gone wild is indeed a flaw that must be remedied, it is patently false to suggest that it is specifically a post-cold war shortcoming: for much of the left, the neo-Stalinist Soviet model was but an unattractive parody of socialism.

Even more unpalatable is the implication — the "ethical" foreign policy angle, for example — that the left has little choice but to operate within the frameworks delineated by those who wield political and economic power.
Mahir Ali,
Mortdale, NSW, Australia

HUGO YOUNG may well suggest that both Professor Chomsky's views and those of a "progressive-radical" persuasion are rooted in the past and dismiss them, but unfortunately he misses the point, ie, capitalism works exceedingly well for a tiny percentage of the world's population, but dooms the vast majority to a life of inequality and poverty. Instead of these "progressive-radical" views "being fated to trawl the Internet in search of confirmation", one could look at the same issue of the Guardian Weekly itself — page 1 (Plague that kills millions, the plague of debt), page 3 (Indonesia revolt turns to violence), page 5 (Lifespan in West) and Page 14 (Why the poor are picking up the tab) — for proof that such a critique is more relevant than ever.
Richard Neal,
Vancouver, Canada

Still fighting old battles

WHILE I condemn the crimes against humanity committed by the Japanese military during the second world war, the A-Class war criminals were prosecuted under the Tokyo trial of 1946, and compensation was agreed and paid in the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1947 (The Week in Britain, May 24).

Why attach blame to those born after the second world war or those who were children during it? Emperor Akihito was only seven when Japan entered the war and it was neither his decision nor request to be given this Order of the Garter. Has Great Britain ever apologised or offered compensation for the Opium war?
C K Uekawa,
University of Brighton

DURING her recent tour of India, not one of the victims of Japanese atrocities came forward to demand that the Queen apologise to the relatives of the victims of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar.
S Jalundhwala,
Mumbai, India

Not so rosy for the workers

I WAS pleased to see the attention given to the new agro-industries in Kenya (Bloom or bust?, April 19). However, the picture drawn by Fred Pearce of the businesses owned by Dicky Evans and the like was unfortunately a bit too rosy. Claiming that people are being employed without wrecking their health is too much beside the truth. Giving regular acetylcholinesterase tests is not enough and will not protect the individual worker if the results of the tests do not bring about preventive action (other than laying off workers with dangerously low levels).

A recent independent study among "well-protected" pesticide applicators from the large flowers and vegetables estates revealed that these workers had their cholinesterase level on average 36 per cent below their baseline level when applying pesticides. According to guidelines from the World Health Organisation, workers should be removed when this level is at 70 per cent of baseline.

Growing roses in the Netherlands may cost more energy for lighting and extra heating, but workers' health and the natural environment are not treated as commodities that can be used without a conscience — as seems to be the case in Kenya.
Hans Kromhout,
Mwanza, Tanzania

Briefly

THE political debate in Germany still centres on the neo-Nazi gains in the state election of Saxony-Anhalt (Immigrants targeted in wake of far-right win, May 10). But instead of an analytical approach as to how to tackle prevailing racist attitudes and activities, the main governing forces in Bonn — especially the Bavarian CSU — provide us with only an ambivalent picture. Their rationale seems to be to integrate any anti-foreigner propaganda spread by the far right DVU (German People's Union) into their current pre-election campaign. I doubt that the incorporation of extreme-right attitudes into German politics can under any circumstances be the answer to the phenomenal increase in racist attacks in this country.
Mirja Lindberg,
Schwabach, Germany

I THINK one of the saddest consequences of India's recent nuclear testing is the backlash directed towards certain charities working in that country (May 24). Many people's knee-jerk reaction may well be. "Well if they can afford nuclear weapons I'm not giving my money for . . ." The sanctions will not last long, certainly if India signs up to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but the long-term effects of the political fallout on charities working in India may well cause lasting damage.
Chris Gladwell,
Carharrack, Cornwall

IN YOUR interesting obituary of Bishop Trevor Huddleston I spotted a mysterious anomaly. According to your piece, Huddleston entered this world as a result of immaculate conception, and to his father no less: "Huddleston was born in Bedford, the son of Captain Sir Ernest Whiteside Huddleston." His father was absent for the first seven years of his life, so the influences on him had to come from somewhere or someone. Could that possibly have been from his unmentioned mother?
Sheila Malovany-Chevallier,
Paris, France

ABOUT a year ago I responded to a question in the Guardian Weekly's Notes & Queries section stating that Ecuador was one country which did not possess a McDonald's restaurant. Since then the fast-food chain has opened one outlet in Quito and is in the process of opening another. The other day, while eating lunch at McDonald's, I spied a man several tables away enjoying his Big Mac, French fries and cola, and reading . . . the Guardian Weekly.
Kenneth D MacHarg,
Quito, Ecuador



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A STRIKING miner sits on a railway line to block trains near the Siberian town of Prokopyevsk last week.

On Monday miners dismantled barricades on the Trans-Siberian and most other railways after a two-week strike, but said they would return if the government fails to pay several months of overdue wages and meet other demands. However, several thousand miners in northern Russia vowed to continue striking and blocking a railway.

The blockades stranded more than 600 trains throughout Russia at the peak of the strike last week and forced senior cabinet ministers to rush to mining regions to stop the crisis from growing into a nationwide strike. The railway ministry said that the strike had cost railroads $58 million in lost revenues and another $123 million for such items as protecting freight in idled trains.

Suharto finally bows out

Andrew Higgins and Nick Cumming-Bruce in Jakarta

AFTER 32 years in power, President Suharto last week took barely three minutes to make his exit, finally uttering in a soft voice the words clamoured for so loudly on the streets across a country of more than 200 million people: "I have decided to step down as the president of Indonesia, effective today."

Asking for forgiveness for "any mistakes or shortcomings", in a speech televised live from the presidential mansion in central Jakarta, Asia's longest serving ruler acknowledged that tanks and troops could no longer sustain a regime deserted by even its most stalwart allies.

Moments later, his vice-president, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, a German-trained aeronautical engineer aged 61, was sworn in as Indonesia's new leader — only the third since the country declared independence from the Netherlands in 1945. But unlike Mr Suharto's ascent in 1966, which launched a so-called New Order, the swearing in of Mr Habibie initiates an uncertain interlude rather than a new reign.

Mr Habibie described demands for reform as "a fresh current carrying us forward into the 21st century". He endorsed the students' call for an end to "corruption, collusion and nepotism", but hailed the man they blame for such ills as the "core of the success of our development".

Though endorsed immediately after his swearing in by the head of the Indonesian armed forces, General Wiranto, Mr Habibie could quickly falter in trying to square his stated commitment to reform with his loyalties to his predecessor. He inherits a regime traumatised by near-anarchy in Jakarta, ravaged by economic crisis and abandoned by its ruling party and the United States.

Mr Suharto's resignation was welcomed by students encamped in the national parliament building. But they quickly refocused their anger on his replacement. "Habibie's mission is to save Suharto, not the country," said Roy Simangungsong, an economics student. "It will be hopeless so long as Habibie is in the presidential suite."

Habibie: uncertain interlude

On Friday last week the military organised a clear-out of students from parliament, offering Mr Habibie at least hope of some respite from student protests.

Mr Habibie used his first cabinet meeting on Monday to announce sweeping political, legal and economic reforms, in an effort to calm domestic agitation and persuade the international financial community that he can stabilise the country.

Yielding to popular demand and pressure from cabinet ministers, Mr Habibie is committed to holding an election "as soon as possible", a senior official said.

The poll would follow an overhaul of Indonesia's restrictive election laws. Mr Habibie told opposition leaders that this should occur within a year.

He also discussed widening the right to organise and allowing anyone to form a political party, his chief spokesman, Akbar Tandjung, said.

The government also took steps to curb the economic privileges enjoyed by Mr Suharto's rapacious and highly unpopular children. The national oil company, Pertamina, is to drop contracts to sell oil to two affiliates partly owned by the Suharto family. Mr Habibie, whom critics call a "super nepotist", has moved relatives from state-related businesses.

But the release of political detainees in an effort to break with the past and find favour with a sceptical public may prove a crucial test of Mr Habibie's plans for reform.

Two prominent political prisoners, the labour leader Muchtar Pakpahan and the Suharto critic Sri Bintang Pamungkas, were freed from Jakarta's Cipinang Prison on Monday.

Speaking from a prison balcony, they earlier told thousands of cheering supporters their release was only the start of a large-scale amnesty. "The government has agreed all political prisoners will be selectively freed," they said, to loud cheers.

Amid chaotic scenes at a packed news conference inside the prison, the justice minister, Mr Muladi, said the government would review the files of all political prisoners. The staged release is expected to take three months.

"This is our Bastille day," said Goenawan Mohamed, a former magazine editor and respected writer, adding that it was Mr Habibie's chance "to be remembered in Indonesian history as a liberator".

But prisoners involved in armed uprisings, ordinary criminal offences, or linked to the violence in 1965 that followed what the Suharto government called a coup attempt against then president Sukarno, would not be freed, Mr Muladi said. Such conditions mean that the East Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmao, is unlikely to be freed.

The military also continues to oppose the release of those linked to the former Communist party, including Cipinang's longest-serving prisoner, Lieutenant-Colonel Latief, aged 72, jailed 32 years ago.

Martin Woollacott, page 12
Le Monde, page 13
Washington Post, page 16

Milosevic ploy may bring down his empire

Jonathan Steele

THE last rusty screws that hold what remains of Yugoslavia together are on the verge of snapping thanks to the latest power-play by the Serbian strongman, Slobodan Milosevic. While media and diplomatic attention has focused on the growing guerrilla war in Kosovo, Mr Milosevic has been using peaceful but Machiavellian means to impose tight control on the neighbouring republic of Montenegro.

The small, mountainous region is the only one of former Yugoslavia's six republics left within the federation. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia left in 1991 and 1992.

The Yugoslav president may be about to send troops to clamp down in Montenegro. But his clumsy effort to bolster Belgrade's control could lead in the end to Montenegro's independence, according to regional observers.

The game centres on parliamentary elections in Montenegro this weekend. Mr Milosevic is trying to ensure his favourites win. But if they do not, he wants the means to impose a state of emergency and rule by decree. It is a Byzantine struggle that moved into high gear last week when Mr Milosevic sacked Radoje Kontic, the prime minister of Yugoslavia.

Mr Kontic, a Montenegrin, had refused to take Mr Milosevic's side in the elections. Through state television, Mr Milosevic has been whipping up hostility towards the Montenegrin president, Milo Djukanovic, who has taken a pro-Western line since he narrowly won power last year. He defeated Momir Bulatovic, a Milosevic ally.

Montenegro has equal status with Serbia in Yugoslavia despite having less than a tenth of Serbia's population — a mere 650,000 people. It is landlocked Serbia's gateway to Adriatic ports. During the wars with Croatia and Bosnia, Montenegro was loyal to Mr Milosevic. It allowed vicious Serb paramilitaries to operate on its territory and its troops joined the Serbs in ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

The Albanian majority in Kosovo, which is still a Serbian province, asks why Montenegro with a third of Kosovo's population should have the status of a federal republic. If Montenegro goes independent, the Albanian argument will be unstoppable.

● Ethnic Albanian leaders in Kosovo made new concessions as they discussed the province's future with Serbian negotiators in Pristina. Under pressure from the United States, they abandoned calls for international mediation by meeting Mr Milosevic this month. Last week they dropped their insistence that they would only deal with Yugoslav representatives, so as not to accept Serbian jurisdiction in the province.

The Kosovo leaders are also being squeezed by the growing power of the the Kosovo Liberation Army, which says there can be no deal short of full independence.

The Week

HUNGARIANS voted for parties opposed to the incumbent Socialists, opening the way for a centre-right coalition. Final results gave the Civic Party 148 seats in the 386-member parliament. The Socialists were second with 134 seats.

Washington Post, page 15

TURKISH police arrested two gunmen and three others suspected of organising an attack on the human rights activist Akin Birdal. The suspects were said to be former members of an ultra-nationalist group.

TWO brothers convicted of killing nine German tourists and their Egyptian driver outside the Egyptian Museum have been hanged in prison.

ONE of Brazil's most important indigenous leaders, Francisco de Assis Araujo, was shot dead as he was parking his car in a small town 240km from Recife.

A MILITARY court in Congo jailed two prominent opponents of President Laurent Kabila for violating a ban on political activity. The disgraced army chief, Masasu Nindanga, was sentenced to 20 years while opposition politician Joseph Olenghankoy got 15 years.

AN EXPLOSION devastated a church in Danville, Illinois, injuring about 32 members of the mostly white congregation. A church 25km away was damaged in a blast earlier this year.

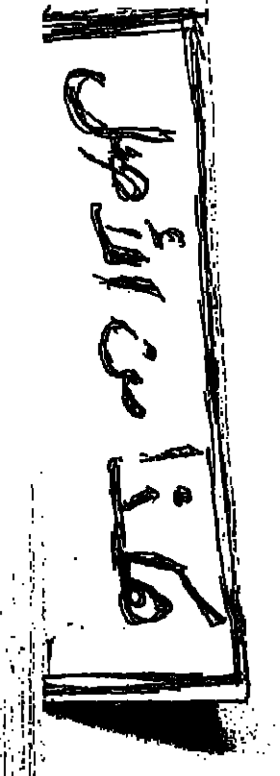
NEARLY 70 people died and 40 were feared buried after an earthquake shook central Bolivia.

MILITANTS wielding sticks, stones and chains broke up a democracy rally of about 2,000 students in Tehran. At least 20 people, mostly students, were injured.

PAKISTANI army commandos overpowered three men who tried to hijack a plane en route from Baluchistan to Karachi. It landed in Hydrabad, in Pakistan, but the hijackers were led to believe it had, as requested, crossed into India.

THREE gang members convicted of murdering the Oscar-winning Killing Fields actor Haing Ngor in Los Angeles in 1996 were given prison sentences ranging from 26 years to life.

FRANK SINATRA ordered that anyone who contested his will be disinherited. His widow Barbara will receive $3.5 million plus three houses. Children Tina, Frank Jr and Nancy each receive $200,000, and his first wife Nancy $250,000. Frank Jr also gets the rights to Sinatra's sheet music.



Anger as EU arms sales code is diluted

Martin Walker in Brussels

THE British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, on Monday won European Union backing for a new code of conduct applying his ethical foreign policy to arms sales. But he came under immediate attack from human rights groups for agreeing to French demands to water it down.

Under the agreement, reached at a meeting of foreign ministers, the 15 EU countries set out common standards to govern the sale of arms to non-EU countries. Under them, exports should not be allowed to states that might use them for external aggression, internal repression or supporting terrorism.

But France ensured that a verdict on human rights violations that would prevent arms sales had to be delivered by a "competent body", such as the EU, the Council of Europe or the United Nations.

This puts the threshold of evidence ominously high. Governments suspected of such violations have the power to refuse access to official monitors — as Algeria did to EU officials this year. Any formal verdict of human rights abuses could therefore be delayed, even amid media reports of violations.

France also ensured that the crucial "no undercutting" rule would be applied in private. This means that if a country seeking to buy arms is turned down by Britain, and then goes to France, Paris will inform London only in private that it is considering the request, rather than notifying all other EU countries.

While EU countries are to provide an annual review of their arms sales and a detailed annual report to the EU Council of Ministers, there is no guarantee that this will be published, as Mr Cook had hoped. That will be up to the Council, despite urgent appeals from human rights campaigners and the Scandinavian countries that "transparency" be the keystone.

"We welcome the agreement of a code as a first step, but there are key areas in which it has to be strengthened," said Paul Eavis, director of Saferworld, the group that has lobbied for the code, along with Amnesty, Oxfam and Christian Aid.

"Urgent priorities are ensuring that all 15 EU member states are informed before one country can undercut another's refusal of an arms export, and increasing transparency and parliamentary scrutiny of weapons sales. The recent scenes of British-supplied arms being used to threaten democracy demonstrations on the streets of Indonesia have again shown the human cost of an unregulated arms trade."

Oxfam's international director, Stewart Wallis, said: "Publishing the annual report on arms sales is absolutely crucial."

The Irish foreign minister, David Andrews, said that he was "bitterly disappointed" the agreement did not include a binding ban on arms sales to governments accused of serious human rights violations.

Mr Cook, who presented the code of conduct as an important extension of his goal of an ethical foreign policy into Europe, hailed it as "a real achievement, a substantial step forward". He said: "The key criterion of this code is whether the arms are to be used for internal repression or external aggression. From now on, our arms industries will compete on price and on quality, but not on the standards that we will all apply on human rights."

Britain sells between $4 billion and $5 billion worth of arms a year, and France some $3 billion to $4 billion, making them by far Europe's biggest arms exporters.

Georgians flee clashes with Abkhaz rebels

James Meek in Moscow

CLASHES between Georgian armed groups and separatist Abkhaz fighters in a Russian-patrolled buffer zone continued this week despite a ceasefire agreement reached between the sides.

Georgia cancelled a military parade in the capital, Tbilisi, and there were reports of heavy armour on the move in Abkhazia as President Eduard Shevardnadze came under increasing pressure to strike back against the rebels who have sent a fresh wave of refugees fleeing the Black Sea province.

With Russian peacekeepers and a handful of United Nations observers caught in the middle, Abkhaz troops continued their sweep through the supposedly neutral buffer zone around the town of Gali, driving out Georgian partisans and emptying villages right up to the edge of the territory controlled by Georgian forces.

"The Abkhazians have orders not to burn houses," an aid official in Tbilisi said. "But still they burn houses."

There are fears that what began this month as a clash between the Abkhazians and Georgian partisans could spread into a wider conflict, dragging Georgian forces and Russian troops into a repeat of the 1992-93 war, in which 10,000 people were killed.

Reporters on the Georgian-controlled side of the Inguri river, which marks the *de facto* border between Georgia proper and rebel Abkhazia, saw smoke around the village of Tagiloni on the far bank and heard gunfire and explosions on Monday. Hundreds of refugees streaming across a railway bridge said the Abkhazians had overrun Tagiloni.

There were reports that the Abkhazians were threatening to destroy a hydroelectric station on the river, controlled jointly by the warring sides, which normally provides Georgia with 40 per cent of its electricity.

There was speculation that the cancellation of the scheduled military parade might mean Georgian troops and heavy equipment were being transferred westwards.

Mr Shevardnadze barely escaped Abkhazia with his life in 1993 when Abkhaz rebels, in all likelihood with Russian backing, drove Georgian government forces out of the region, once the Soviet Union's leading resort zone.

Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Georgians fled, creating an angry constituency for forced reconquest that has gnawed at the president ever since.





Australians mark a Sorry Day

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

BOTANY BAY'S national park is to be renamed in the interests of political sensitivity. The search was announced this week for an Aboriginal replacement name for Captain Cook's Australian landing place, so called in 1770 because of the strange plants that were collected on its shores.

The New South Wales state government announced the move to change the name of Botany Bay National Park as an act of reconciliation between black and white Australians.

The initiative came on the eve of Australia's first Sorry Day, a controversial event designed to highlight past injustices to Aboriginal families broken up by the former state and federal government policies of removing children from their parents. The events have largely been boycotted by the federal government.

The Labor state government has decided the name for Botany Bay park — also the birthplace of white Australia — should incorporate indigenous words to encourage "healing" and understanding. One suggestion which tribal elders will discuss is Gillingarie, a word in the language of the original Dharawal people that means "land that belongs to us all".

The environment minister, Pam Allan, said any name would have to be rich in meaning to all Australians.

The Botany Bay renaming comes amid a chorus of apologies to Aboriginals from officials, church leaders and police chiefs — with the exception of the prime minister, John Howard.

Mr Howard is standing by his decision not to apologise formally for the forced removal of thousands of Aboriginal children — the so-called Stolen Generation — from their families in this century. While expressing personal regret, he claims he cannot apologise for the actions of previous governments.

Sources close to the government have described the privately sponsored Sorry Day as "a guilt trip which manifests disunity".

A man stands with balloons in front of the ancient Egyptian Sphinx in Giza last Sunday, a day before a ceremony to mark the completion of 10 years' restoration work, which cost $3 million PHOTO: AMR NABIL

Switzerland owns up to 'dead gold'

Ian Traynor in Bonn

A SWISS government commission admitted for the first time this week that some of the plundered gold channelled to the Swiss national bank (SNB) from Nazi Germany during the second world war came from concentration camp victims.

While the report by a panel of historians did not confirm whether the gold included fillings ripped from the mouths of camp inmates, it said it was beyond doubt that the scores of tons of Nazi gold included 119.5 kilograms smelted from the watches, coins and jewellery of Holocaust victims.

The amount of so-called dead gold mentioned in the report is less than estimates of some researchers and United States organisations, who contend that as much as 600kg of victims' gold was moved into Switzerland. But the figure was triple that suggested in a US government report last year.

The panel of historians from Switzerland, the US, Israel, Britain and Poland said in a 200-page interim report that the Swiss national bank could not have known the origins of the gold. It had been passed by the SS to the Reichsbank, then to the German smelting firm Degussa for processing into ingots before being sent abroad.

But the bank came in for some unequivocal criticism of its wartime activities. From 1941, when the Holocaust got under way, its bosses were "increasingly aware that Jews and other persecuted groups were being robbed", the report said.

"In 1943, at the latest, the SNB had knowledge of the systematic extermination of victims of the Nazi regime. None the less, SNB decision-makers neglected taking measures to distinguish looted gold from the other gold."

The report estimated the Holocaust victims' valuables at 582,000 Swiss francs at wartime prices, while the overall value of the Nazi gold handled by the SNB was put at $280 million, the equivalent of $2.5 billion at today's prices.

The report is seen as a crucial stage towards settling the two-year row between the US and Switzerland over the Nazi gold scandal. The US is threatening to boycott Swiss banks pending lawsuits and argument about the level of compensation for Holocaust survivors or their relatives.

The SNB responded to the report by voicing regret that it had handled stolen valuables, but said reparations already agreed meant it did not need to take further action. "The bank regrets most profoundly that in accepting gold deliveries from the Reichsbank it may unwittingly also have acquired gold deriving from victims of concentration camps," its statement said.

The bank has already agreed to make 100 million Swiss francs ($67 million) available to a humanitarian fund for Holocaust victims.

Jean-François Bergier, the Swiss professor who chairs the commission, said that the dead gold was "the most tragic, most emotionally charged" of the wealth plundered by the Nazis and deposited in Switzerland. He said the Swiss national bank had pursued a policy of "business as usual" with Hitler's bankers, although "it was clear that Germany was appropriating gold illegally".

Kohl minister plays the race card

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERMANY'S powerful finance minister, Theo Waigel, last week called for a halt to immigration, and demanded the summary expulsion of foreigners found guilty of crimes, along with their families. He issued a resounding rebuff to the multicultural society as Germany's election campaign increasingly turned anti-foreigner.

Mr Waigel, head of Bavaria's ruling Christian Social Union (CSU), the regional sister party to Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, told a pre-election congress that Germany must not become "a country of immigration" despite the fact that almost 10 per cent of the population are foreigners. While many of the 8 million foreigners resident in Germany are making contributions to the tax and welfare systems, the vast majority, many of whom were born in Germany, are denied the vote.

"We are not a multicultural society, we remain a German nation," Mr Waigel told CSU party faithful. "Those who abuse their right as guests have no business to be in the host country as guests."

The CSU's election manifesto, adopted last week, insisted that foreigners in Germany accept the country's "society and values".

Germany's best-known writer, Günter Grass, provoked a storm of protest and denials last year when he accused the government and the ruling parties of sponsoring and encouraging closet racism. But liberals will see Mr Waigel's speech as confirming the Grass charges.

All large west German cities are multicultural, with foreigners comprising up to 30 per cent of the population.

While declarations like Mr Waigel's have the effect of associating crime with immigrants in the public's mind, figures to be released this week are expected to show that foreigners' criminality is decreasing. But their crime rate is inflated by up to a third by the inclusion of offences against passport and asylum regulations, which do not apply to Germans.

By contrast, a recent report on political extremism from the domestic intelligence service showed that neo-Nazi crime and violence, including assaults on foreigners, soared last year by a third to its highest level since unification in 1990. Acts of neo-Nazi violence, including assaults on foreigners, went up by 27 per cent.

Campaigning on a racist platform, demanding jobs for Germans and the expulsion of foreigners, the extreme right German People's Union (DVU) shocked the political establishment last month by taking 13 per cent of the vote in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, the strongest extreme right performance since the war.

Franz Schönhuber, the former SS officer and neo-Nazi leader, announced last week that he would stand in the September elections for the DVU. Both Mr Schönhuber and the DVU leader, the millionaire publisher Gerhard Frey, are based in Munich, the Bavarian capital. Mr Waigel's speech was undoubtedly aimed at stealing the DVU's thunder by appealing to at least some of its extremist supporters.

The opposition Social Democrats, well ahead of Mr Kohl and Mr Waigel's coalition in the opinion polls, are also playing the law and order and anti-immigrant card for fear of appearing soft and forfeiting votes to the far right.

Czech town plans to wall in Gypsies

A CZECH town plans to ghettoise several hundred Gypsies by building a five-metre wall around their blocks of flats to segregate them from Czech residents, *writes Ian Traynor.*

Senior officials in Prague said recently they feared the move could harm the country's image as it embarks on talks for membership of Nato and the European Union.

But the town council in northern Usti nad Labem seemed unrepentant, with one local official telling a Prague newspaper that the wall was being built for the Gypsies' own good. Miroslav Harcinik said: "Why should one group of people be involuntarily exposed to such an unpleasant environment? I've asked the Gypsies and they said they wouldn't mind the wall."

The Czech Republic is home to hundreds of thousands of Gypsies or Roma, who are the targets of prejudice, disenfranchisement and racial assaults. Many are stripped of Czech nationality.

The Human Rights Watch organisation in New York reported last year that Gypsies in the Czech Republic were increasingly victims of racist attack. The organisation documented 27 racially motivated murders of Gypsies among 181 violent assaults since the Czech Republic came into being in 1993.

There was outrage in Britain last year after several hundred Gypsies from Slovakia and the Czech Republic arrived seeking asylum. Several thousand others travelled to Canada after a television programme told them they could enter that country easily and would receive automatic welfare payments.

In many cases, Czech officials and mayors encouraged the Gypsies to leave, paying most of their airfares in return for signed pledges renouncing Czech citizenship and giving up their tenancies of council property.

The former interior minister and 1989 revolutionary, Jan Ruml, said last week the plan to segregate Gypsies and Czechs with a wall was scandalous. "The Czech Republic urgently needs a broad debate over its attitude to its Roma minority," Mr Ruml said.

Authorities in Usti nad Labem argued that the wall, which will cost an estimated $11,000, was a response to constant complaints by locals about "unhygienic" conditions in and around the two blocks of flats.

Rude awakening for California dreamers

US DIARY
Martin Kettle

TWENTY years ago next month, voters in California set off a political earthquake that reverberated not just around the state, but around the whole of the United States, and across the Atlantic as well. When they passed the so-called Proposition 13, Californians not only slashed their own property taxes, but also raised the more general standard of a populist "tax revolt" that has helped to define politics in the US and elsewhere ever since.

Proposition 13 did exactly what most of the people who voted for it hoped: it cut their spiralling property taxes. But in doing so, Proposition 13 also plunged the state of California into financial crisis. The budgeted income of California's counties, cities and schools fell immediately by 53 per cent. As a result, services to residents were immediately cut back. Eligibility was drastically restricted. Many previously free services now came with charges attached. Long-term investment in the public sector all but ceased and local services deteriorated for lack of finance.

Whether Californians intended these consequences when they rallied in such overwhelming force behind Howard Jarvis's tax-cutting campaign in June 1978 — Proposition 13 was carried by nearly two-to-one — is probably doubtful. But today, though they now live with the consequences, a majority of the state's voters still believe that Proposition 13 was worth the price they have paid for it. In a poll by the Field Institute this month, 53 per cent said they would vote for Proposition 13 if it was put to them now.

Jarvis's triumph sent a signal to every American politician. Many states tried to emulate California, and several succeeded. Two more — Maine and South Dakota — will vote later this year on Proposition 13-based policies in an effort to join the club. But the bigger consequence of Jarvis's victory was that it redefined the limits of the possible in American politics. It carried Governor Ronald Reagan from California to the presidency two years later, putting tax cuts at the centre of the party battle for the next decade. It revived rightwing, individualist politics in the US, Britain and elsewhere, and handed leaders such as Reagan and Margaret Thatcher a crusading weapon. Eventually, also, it was to compel a new generation of pragmatic leftwing leaders such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair to abandon or scale down some of the most dearly held principles of their parties.

But if the passing of Proposition 13 appears in retrospect to be one of the epochal moments of late 20th century politics, there is little doubt that it also heralded an ongoing period of genuine political and cultural crisis in California, a state which had always seemed (to itself and others) to embody the future. For, as the US has often seemed to the rest of the world, so California has frequently appeared to Americans — as a place of hope and plenty, where good times exist now, not in the uncertain future.

Everything is relative, but the past 20 years have seen the Californian dream go very sour for many people. Nowhere is this more obvious than in education. California's schools, which for decades had been among the best-funded and most successful in the US are now among the worst-funded and least successful. Twenty years ago California was roughly 10 per cent above the national average in spending per pupil; today it is about 20 per cent below the average, with predictable results.



Berkeley College in California. Spending cuts in education have tarnished the state's once gilded reputation

This is not necessarily to claim *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, but there are many who believe California's decline to be intimately related to Proposition 13. Before 1978 the "ballot initiative" procedure which Jarvis so skilfully orchestrated was a fairly marginal and esoteric component of the state's political process. Since 1978, however, the ballot initiative has become integral and professionalised. Increasingly controlled by rich companies and individuals, the ballot initiative culture now shapes state policy across a wide range of issues — from affirmative action to zoned car insurance, taking in education, the death penalty, the environment and gun control.

California's ballot initiative rules date from the state's "Progressive Era" government in 1911. By the 1960s, the number of ballot initiatives had dwindled to a mere nine throughout the whole decade. Since Proposition 13, however, initiatives have come thick and fast. The 44 initiatives submitted to voters during the 1980s were a record, but already in the 1990s there have been a further 49, with more to come.

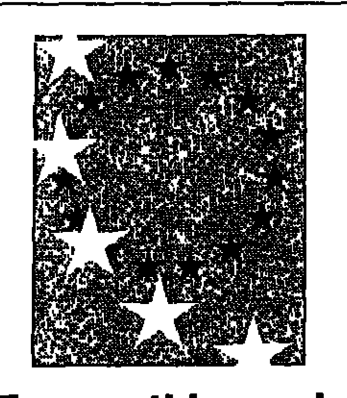
On June 2 Californian voters will face five more initiatives, including Proposition 226, which aims to stop the automatic check-off of trade union dues by employers, and Proposition 227, which seeks to reduce bilingual education (mainly among Spanish and Cantonese speakers) in California schools, in favour of English. Sponsors of eight more initiatives have already submitted signatures in the hope of getting their measures on the ballot in November. A further 32 ballot initiatives are currently being circulated.

As the number of ballot initiatives grows, so the cost of a ballot initiative campaign is also increasing. More than $140 million is being spent on them this year alone, and the sum spent on ballots now routinely exceeds the already inflated cost of election campaigning. Increasingly, the professionals believe, it is impossible to run an effective ballot campaign without the kind of funds which only the rich or big business can command.

Such spending does not guarantee success, of course. Proposition 99, an anti-smoking measure to increase tobacco taxes, was adopted in 1988, thus showing both that big corporate money can be spent in a lost cause and that in certain circumstances the voters will support tax increases. The polls, however, suggest that Californians like the system, even though they see its weaknesses. This particular Californian earthquake seems set to continue, irrespective of the damage it may cause.

Last week I wrote that Barbara Boxer defeated Michael Huffington in the 1994 California election for the US Senate. In fact, she beat Dianne Feinstein. My apologies

Commission taxes British resolve



Europe this week

Martin Walker

WITH the single currency up and running, the single European tax regime is not far behind. The European Commission last week unveiled its plan for the first uniform measure, an agreement to close tax havens. Under the scheme citizens who have offshore or foreign bank accounts will face the cruel dilemma of paying a mandatory 20 per cent withholding tax or having their foreign bank account details forwarded to their national tax authority.

The plan, which has already been approved in principle by Britain, threatens the offshore tax havens of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Cayman Islands. The statement of principle says clearly: "Member states with dependent or associated territories or which have special responsibilities or taxation prerogatives in respect of other territories, commit themselves, within the framework of their constitutional arrangements, to ensuring that these principles are applied in those territories too."

The proposal may also affect the City of London's lucrative Eurobond market, after the European commissioner for single market affairs, Mario Monti, said that his tax plan was "intended to include the Eurobond market and zero-coupon bonds". (These latter pay no formal interest, but roll up the annual gains into the capital of the bond. Monti intends to treat these gains as taxable interest.)

The European Union scheme threatens to start a political row in Britain, with Tory MPs claiming that this is the first crucial step on the path to tax harmonisation across Europe, with Britain's low-tax status likely to be among the first victims. The warnings should not really be necessary. Europeans have made no secret of the grand strategy of a single currency leading to a single monetary policy and a single fiscal regime. After this, the arguments about a federal Europe become moot, because with a single currency, common interest rates and then with a common tax regime, the commanding heights of a European superstate will have been seized.

Take two recent statements, one by Monti. During "in camera" testimony to the European Parliament's economic and monetary affairs committee, Monti said that European tax co-ordination was "going ahead like a missile". His policy, he added, was to so harmonise European tax rates that "tax differences would no longer be an important factor in the decisions about movements of capital and labour".

The second comment comes from a politician who, unlike Monti, was elected — Jean-Luc Dehaene, the prime minister of Belgium. "The ongoing debate about tax co-ordination, focused mainly on corporate and capital income taxes, is apparently of a technical nature, but is of the utmost importance: the issue at stake is nothing less than how to sustain the relatively high degree of solidarity which is at the core of our social contract."

When a politician uses the words "relatively high degree of solidarity" and "our social contract" in the same breath, he is talking of the need for generous social and welfare provisions, to be financed by high taxes. And whereas in pre-Thatcher days there was indeed a broad, social democratic consensus in Europe supporting this aim, even the election of a New Labour government in Britain has not brought that old consensus back to life.

Government spending averages 48.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) across the EU, with a peak in Sweden of 65 per cent. Britain is at the bottom of the league table, with government spending taking only 41 per cent of GDP. Any plan to harmonise EU taxes, while reducing the tax burden in countries such as Sweden, Denmark and Germany, would drive up tax rates in Britain.

THE DEMAND for a withholding tax began with Germany, which estimates that it loses the equivalent of $16 billion a year in taxes through money squirrelled away in foreign (usually Luxembourg) bank accounts. The French authorities have long fretted at the amount of taxable francs being driven across the border into discreet Switzerland. And with French and Belgian businesses re-registering as British companies to take advantage of the UK's low taxes and social payments, the scheme has started to take on a faintly anti-British whiff.

Meanwhile the timing of the Commission's announcement means that the key decision will be taken after the end of Britain's six-month term at the Presidency of the Council. For the next year, Austria and then Germany will hold the presidency, two countries keen to push ahead with tax harmonisation.

British officials made it clear that, if necessary, the Government would be prepared to use its veto in the European Council to defend UK interests. But they think, or perhaps hope, that should not prove necessary thanks to the special constitutional status of the Channel Islands. They are also counting on the appointment last week of the UK Treasury Secretary, Dawn Primarolo, to chair the EU Council working group on the EU's stated objective of "eliminating tax differences as a factor in investment decisions".

The war on tax evasion is like Mother's Day: nobody wants to be seen to be against it. But what is really at stake in the tax debate is the degree to which sovereignty over financial policy (and general social policy too, according to Dehaene) is being handed to Europe.

And this raises a further problem, the political viability of a one-size-fits-all European economic system. When the first crisis hits a part of Euroland, and the country or region in trouble is no longer free to cushion the blow by devaluing its own currency, imposing its own tax cuts or relaxing monetary controls, what are the afflicted voters and politicians to do? A "harmonised" Euroland would appear to offer no way out.

Israel's Lebanese wound fails to heal

David Sharrock in Kfar Ouman

THE sharp report of three missiles slamming into the southern side of the Thura Ridge might once have shaken villagers, but Yusif and his friends hardly stirred in their chairs as silence reasserted itself.

War in the hills of south Lebanon has been raging wearily on for 20 years now, following its own rhythm of hit-and-run attack by the Party of God, the Iranian-backed Shia Hizbollah, and sudden reprisal by the mightier forces of Israel, dug into their self-declared 23km-wide security zone.

Yusif was scathing about Israel's constant but recently more urgent avowals of its desire to pull back behind the international frontier and end the war of attrition. "The Jews are liars," snarled Yusif, as the house he was sitting in front of was raked by gunfire from the Israeli outpost on the hill overlooking them.

"We support the resistance. Nothing will ever change until Israel leaves," he added in response to the latest Israeli offer to implement the 20-year-old United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 to pull out — as long as guarantees are given by the Lebanese to protect Israel's northern border.

Further south, Sheikh Nabil Kaouk apologised for the delay. The military and political leader of Hizbollah's southern Lebanese command had been detained by the war effort.

"Last night was a little hot, the Israelis launched a new kind of rocket. It caused fires and terror among the people, but we are dealing with it," he said. "The hands of the United States government are covered in Lebanese blood. Why are the people there not demonstrating against what is happening here?"

Demonstrations are taking place against Israel's occupation of south Lebanon, but in Tel Aviv rather than Washington. Some are calling it Israel's Vietnam. The body-bags come home for tearful funerals while a tide of anger rises over a conflict that few understand or care about.

At Yakinton, an Israeli infantry outpost facing the Lebanese village of Bustan, Captain Erez Meirovitch, aged 23, declared: "This is the Game Zone, where we have special rules. They can kill us and we can kill them, but Hizbollah can't cross the border."

It is indeed a special war, played by intricate and undisclosed rules of engagement. Deadly, but at times metaphorical. United Nations forces deployed in the zone said that Hizbollah attacks on Israeli forces and their proxy fighters, the mainly Christian South Lebanese Army, were at a 12-year high, yet the casualty toll was sharply down on last year.

"The Hizbollah are ringing some outposts with mortar shells, one in front, one behind and both sides. It's as if they're saying, 'We know where you are but take this as a message'," said a UN official.

Captain Meirovitch took no comfort from Hizbollah's accuracy. "They change the way they work all the time. They fight very well and they know their work, but most of the time they lose. They are good, but not good enough.

"I try not to think about the politics and the protest groups. Like everyone, I know we have to get out of Lebanon but until then I will do my mission. I believe we will be here for a long time. Six months ago I would have said that we have to get out, but now I think it's a mistake to say it.

"It's bad for morale. My soldiers go back home, and their families and friends are saying it, and they bring it back with them. I hope they tell them what I tell them, that from the military point of view it's smart to be here. We should get out after we sign the right agreement.

"I can look out ahead of me and worry about my soldiers, some of them now laying ambushes, getting wet and cold. But I prefer to look behind me, back down on all these villages in Israel, living peacefully. It makes you feel proud, that you're completing your mission."

Local Shias give V-signs to incoming Lebanese soldiers in south Lebanon PHOTOGRAPH: NABIL ISMAIL

Brigadier-General Effi Fain, commander of Israel's Galilee division and a veteran of Entebbe, saw no contradiction in praising Hizbollah as a professional force with whom he could confidently sign a peace treaty — and describing them as the "spearhead of the Islamic world revolution".

"Those who say that a withdrawal would end the war are very naive. There is no difference between what we are doing here and what the free democratic world did against Hitler. We don't make war in Lebanon, we protect life out of necessity.

"Hizbollah is very rational, very disciplined. They are not crazy religious people with Messianic eyes. They are very practical people.

"The main factor of fighting this war is of gaining time. We are like a rock. We can stand here for a thousand years if that is what is needed to gain time for the politicians. Our job as an army is to convince the other side that hostile activity will bring them to a dead end. If we withdraw it will never stop, because they will say, 'It works, so let's press on'."

Back on the other side of the Game Zone, Sheikh Kaouk was equally confident of victory. "We will continue resisting as long as there is occupation of our land. We don't foresee that they will withdraw soon, but they will one day and then Hizbollah will be victorious and glorious."

As for the Israeli general's fears that Hizbollah would simply export their revolution across the border if there was a withdrawal, the sheikh offered no more than a tantalising sentence. "To help the Palestinian people doesn't necessarily mean that we will aid them militarily, but we do say that when there is an aggressor there must be resistance."

The sheikh was acutely conscious of the impact his campaign was having on the Israeli public. "The more casualties Israel suffers, the closer we get to freeing our land."

● Opposition groups appear to have made serious gains in Lebanon's first local elections in 35 years.

Rightwing Christian groups, which oppose the Syrian presence and its 35,000 troops in Lebanon, swept to victory in some parts of the Mount Lebanon governorate.

The Hizbollah won in its stronghold in Beirut's southern suburbs, defeating an alliance of its rival Syrian-backed Shia Amal Movement and candidates backed by the prime minister, Rafik al-Hariri.

Rightwing Christian opposition groups were reported to have won a number of municipal and mayoral seats in the polls, their first entry into the election arena since the end of the 1975-90 civil war.

'I'll never forgive them for what they put me through'

A man jailed for 12 years in Israel's 'security zone' talks to **David Sharrock**

HASSAN had no warning of his release. After 12 years of imprisonment without trial at Al-Khiam jail in south Lebanon, he was suddenly free to go. He feels guilty about the 160 inmates left behind.

Visitors to Al-Khiam, in Israel's 15km-wide "security zone", are rare. For 10 years the International Committee of the Red Cross was denied access, as were relatives.

In 1995 the ban was lifted and limited access allowed. But last September, when 12 Israeli soldiers were killed in a Hizbullah ambush in Lebanon, the shutters came down again.

Hassan is the first person in nine months to bring news from Al-Khiam. Sitting up in bed in a Beirut hospital, he recalls how he lived for 12 years in a cell measuring less than 3m by 10m with 11 other prisoners — all detained without trial.

"I was first put in a room only 90 centimetres square and kept there for two months, I was tortured for months. Once I was kept without food and water for four days.

"I was questioned by the South Lebanese Army [a mainly Christian force allied to, and paid for by, Israel] but the Israelis came regularly to check up on everything. I was whipped and beaten with sticks; they attached wires to my fingers and genitals and electrocuted me.

"They would put a hood over my head and I could hear one man hand-cranking a generator and another sprayed me with water until I passed out. I was starved and denied sleep for three months. Since then I have been beaten regularly, and they use psychological torture. They told me again and again that they would kill my family."

Hassan has no news of the jail's most famous inmate, Suha Bishara, held in solitary confinement. In 1988 Ms Bishara, then a 21-year-old student, shot and wounded General Antoine Lahad, the South Lebanese Army (SLA) commander. She has never been tried.

Israel denies any responsibility for Al-Khiam prison, claiming it to be "a south Lebanese prison facility". But the SLA directs all inquiries to the Israel Defence Force.

The Hizbullah leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, has said the Lebanese prisoners may soon be exchanged for the remains of Israeli soldiers.

Hassan's release this month may presage a settlement. "But I shall never forgive them for what they put me through. Israel is the aggressor, but the SLA is doing their dirty work."

Kurds wield television as a weapon

Chris Morris in Diyarbakir

AT SEVEN o'clock every evening Turkan and her family gather round the television set in their small high-rise flat. Thanks to a fuzzy satellite signal they watch the news in their own language, Kurdish.

It is illegal, but they don't seem to mind; nor do their neighbours, who are watching the same programme next door. Technology has opened a new front line in the long-running war in southeastern Turkey.

"It would be very bad for the Kurds if Med-TV had not started," said Turkan. "We understand their programmes, and we like the news. They tell the truth."

Med-TV is a Kurdish-language satellite channel which broadcasts from London in open support of the violent Kurdish rebel group, the PKK. The Turkish government still bans all broadcasting in Kurdish, and it wants the British government to close the station down.

"I think it's the most significant thing the PKK has achieved in the last few years," said a journalist in Diyarbakir. "A lot of people who don't approve of their methods still watch Med-TV. It proves that Kurdish nationalism is alive and well."

Now the PKK and its elusive leader, Abdullah Ocalan, who is based in Syria, can get their message across to thousands of people every day. They no longer have to carry their fight physically into Kurdish-majority cities such as Diyarbakir, where the Turkish army has restored state control.

The real war has moved further away, to the mountains in the southeast.

The army says it has the PKK on the run. This year it launched one of its biggest operations yet, involving up to 50,000 troops backed by fighter jets and helicopter gunships. For the past few weeks they have combed the mountains north of Diyarbakir, hunting down what they call the remnants of the PKK.

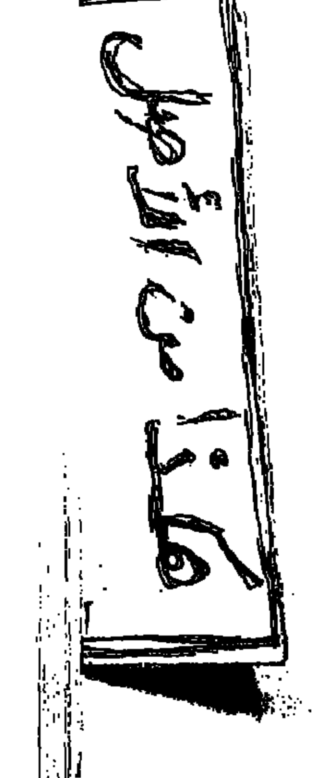
Bolstered by better weapons and a greater understanding of how to fight a mobile guerrilla force, the army is confidently predicting the PKK's demise.

There is no doubt that the PKK has lost ground to the army in the past few years, but the price has been terribly high — thousands of people killed, thousands of villages forcibly evacuated and human rights trampled underfoot. Nevertheless the Turkish state is once again proclaiming a new dawn in the southeast.

"Things are going very well here," enthused Hakki Urun, the deputy governor of six districts that are ruled under a state of emergency. "Diyarbakir is a normal city again." But the underlying causes of the conflict remain. Many Kurds still want greater recognition of their cultural identity, the right to educate their children in their own language, and a measure of political autonomy.

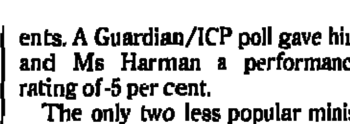
"They say they've won, but who have they beaten?" asked an official of the Kurdish political party, Hadep. "It's just propaganda. The Kurds are still here and nothing much has changed."

Undaunted, the army insists that it now wants to win local hearts and minds. It will have to compete with the message coming out of the sky.



The Week In Britain James Lewis

Early departure for head of public prosecutions



DAME Barbara Mills resigned as Director of Public Prosecutions a year before the expiry of her contract, denying that she had been forced out by the Attorney-General, John Morris, before he publishes a damning report into the running of the widely criticised Crown Prosecution Service.

The CPS was in a mess before Dame Barbara, a high-flying criminal lawyer and former head of the Serious Fraud Office, was appointed to sort it out six years ago. She reorganised the service, but staff morale plummeted and the CPS is, if anything, even more widely criticised now than before Dame Barbara's appointment.

Police accuse it of slowness — and reluctance — in bringing cases to trial. Overburdened CPS lawyers complain that they cannot get on with their jobs because they are drowning in a sea of paperwork. And perhaps most seriously, judges have criticised CPS decisions not to prosecute police officers over deaths in custody. A drastic overhaul of the service is expected.

Although Dame Barbara was said to be more bureaucratic than her predecessors, seemingly impervious to criticism and unwilling to admit errors, the likelihood is that it will take more than her premature departure to improve a service that is recognised to be ramshackle, underfunded and over worked.

Two inquiries — one into the organisation and running of the CPS and another into the way it takes decisions on whether to prosecute police officers — have yet to report, but they are believed to have undermined Dame Barbara's position. They are also likely to cause problems for the Attorney-General when he faces the question — ultimately a ministerial responsibility — of how the service should be made more efficient.

IN CALLING for an inquiry into the naming of paedophiles by local and national newspapers, the chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, Lord Wakeham, drew timely attention to nasty outbreaks of "vigilantism" which have led to physical attacks on sometimes innocent people.

The commission acted in response to complaints from the Association of Chief Probation Officers about the growth of newspaper "paedophile registers" and campaigns to "out" child sex offenders. Its chairman, Howard Lockwood, said there were too many cases in which newspaper involvement and heavy editorial coverage had served to "excite public disorder".

The probation officers' complaint is that newspapers' pursuit of paedophiles has driven offenders underground, making them harder to supervise and therefore making the public more, rather than less, vulnerable.

THE TROUBLED first year in office of Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, has so damaged his standing as to make him as unpopular among voters as Harriet Harman, the Social Security minister, who was given the thankless task of trying to cut benefits to single parents. A Guardian/ICP poll gave him and Ms Harman a performance rating of -5 per cent.

The only two less popular ministers were Lord Irvine (-7 per cent), the Lord Chancellor, who spent lavish sums of money refurbishing his official apartments, and Peter Mandelson (-10 per cent), the Minister without Portfolio, considered by many to have too great an influence on the Prime Minister.

Tony Blair, whose 48 per cent approval rating, breaks all records for prime ministers in office, was outshone by Mo Mowlam (+64 per cent), the Northern Ireland Secretary, who impressed voters by plunging into the complexities of the peace process while still recovering from a brain tumour.

As he contemplates his first Cabinet reshuffle, Mr Blair will need to recognise that the three most popular ministers are Gordon Brown, the Chancellor; Jack Straw, the Home Secretary; and David Blunkett, the Education Secretary.

Mowlam profile, page 24

THE FIRST libel action against a UK-based Internet service provider (ISP) is being brought by Laurence Godfrey, a London lecturer in physics and computer science. He is suing Demon Internet Limited for defamation over a message posted last year on a Use-Net newsgroup. A problem for Mr Godfrey, who is claiming £50,000 damages, is that he will have to prove that the defence of "innocent dissemination", which is available to bookshops, printers and others, is not available to ISP organisations.

A NEW FORM of surgery was claimed by a Bristol neurosurgeon, Stephen Gill, as the most significant advance in the treatment of Parkinson's disease for more than 30 years.

A neurostimulator, a pacemaker-like device, is implanted in the patient's chest wall, and four tiny electrodes are set deep in the brain. In the midst of a tremor the patient uses a hand-held magnet to send a mild current to the electrodes to block the over-active nerve cells responsible for rigidity and spasms.

So far 30 people have received the surgery, which is being seen as a long-term alternative to the standard L-Dopa drug treatment.



Building for the future: 'Farmers are not the enemy, it's the biotechnology companies' PHOTO: ANDREW TESTA

Activists take over field in genetic protest

ENVIRONMENTAL activists have taken over a field of genetically modified sugar-beet and plan a month-long occupation, *writes Rory Carroll*.

Up to 40 squatters are inviting the public to visit workshops and displays which warn that the untested technology could damage health. They said the occupation, on a football-sized field outside Norwich in East Anglia, was the first of many planned against an estimated 300 test sites in Britain.

Protesters set up camp last weekend. Norfolk police arrived 40 minutes later to see the first signs of a kitchen, visitors' centre, toilets and organic garden. Assured that it was a peaceful trespass against "Frankenstein food", four officers kept watch while barrels of water, a kettle, stove and rucksacks were lifted over knee-high wire mesh. A sympathetic local contractor supplied free food.

No prosecutions for criminal damage to the sugar-beet could be made because an unknown group destroyed the crop weeks before the protesters arrived.

A court order for eviction, which the landlord is considering, may take weeks to obtain.

The month-long stay is intended to prevent replanting and afford time for symbolic shoots from the protesters' organic garden of tomatoes, peas, elderberry and melons to appear.

Development of hi-tech foods has sparked opposition among Europeans concerned that transferring genetic material from one species to another could create new toxins.

"Farmers are not the enemy, it's the biotechnology companies who want to make billions," said Paul, planting a Jolly Roger flag beside the kitchen. "This is a message to them, to sod off."

Nurses freed amid media frenzy

Guardian Reporters

TWO British nurses jailed in Saudi Arabia after the murder of a colleague were pardoned and freed last week by the country's ruler, King Fahd. They flew back to Britain and a media storm as to their innocence or guilt.

Lucille McLauchlan and Deborah Parry had been held in jail since their arrest following the murder of Yvonne Gilford in December 1996.

McLauchlan, aged 32, from Dundee, and Parry, aged 39, from Alton, Hampshire, were charged with Gilford's murder on December 24, 1996. Gilford, a 55-year-old Australian, had arrived in Saudi Arabia several months before the British women to take a job as a senior theatre nurse.

The Saudi authorities said McLauchlan and Parry had confessed to the crime and admitted having a lesbian relationship with Gilford. But two weeks later the women withdrew the confessions, which it was later claimed were made under duress.

Parry maintained that she and McLauchlan had been sexually molested and beaten into confessing to the murder by Saudi police. "They burned my eyes with cigarettes, hitting me across the throat and at the end of those four or five days it was easier to say we had done that," she told the BBC.

Meanwhile the Saudi lawyer who represented the nurses during their 17 months in prison bitterly accused them of "financial opportunism" and of contriving stories about their ordeal at the hands of Saudi police after the families of both nurses sold their stories to British newspapers for six-figure sums.

In an extraordinary attack, Salah Al Hejailan insisted the British nurses had not been sexually abused or tortured in custody. Parry and McLauchlan had invented the claim that they had been forced to confess because of huge financial incentives from newspapers, he said.

"The British media tempted them with money in an effort to undermine and cast doubt on the proceedings," he said. "This will not impress anyone who is reasonable.

"The pardon granted by King Fahd out of forgiveness . . . should not be undermined by the atrocious slander and financial opportunism we are witnessing in this sorry affair."

The attack is all the more wounding since it comes from the man who defended both women during their entire time in captivity, and who offered his services free of charge.

Gilford's family was clearly angered at the nurses' release, and their lawyers called for the immediate payment of A$1.7 million (£750,000) in compensation.

The victim's brother, Frank Gilford, said: "I reckon they should honour their deal. I reckon we have behaved with the utmost civility."

The money, A$1 million of which Mr Gilford has promised to a hospital in his sister's memory, is being held in a trust account in Adelaide.

The two nurses now face a fresh investigation into the murder allegations against them that could lead to them being struck off the British nursing register.

In what could, in effect, amount to the case being tried again, the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing is preparing to launch an investigation after receiving a formal complaint against the nurses from the Labour MP for Glasgow Kelvin, George Galloway. He said it was in the public interest that the body which oversees professional standards should act.

"Notwithstanding any opposition I have to the regime in Saudi Arabia the facts are that the evidence against these women is extremely powerful and serious. Even though the conviction occurred abroad it is none the less a conviction and should at the very least be investigated before they are allowed to practise as nurses," Mr Galloway said.

Although King Fahd commuted their sentences, their convictions still stand.

The UKCC may wait until after June 18, when McLauchlan is due to appear at Dundee Sheriff Court to face a criminal charge over the theft of £1,740 from a terminally ill Aids patient's credit card in 1996. This was the reason she sought work in Saudi Arabia.

Catherine Bennett, page 22

In Brief

UNITED Nations legal experts in New York ruled that it was not, after all, illegal for Sandline, the company in dispute with the Foreign Office, to send weapons to the Nigerian-led peace-keeping force that restored the Kabbah regime in Sierra Leone.

JOHN ADEY, chief executive of the National Blood Authority, has been sacked as part of a drive to improve confidence in the service.

CHRISTOPHER HOWES, a British mine clearance expert kidnapped in Cambodia more than two years ago, has been murdered, the Foreign Office said.

BRISTOL prison is at the centre of three separate inquiries following the deaths of three inmates in as many weeks.

MIDLAND Bank faces a bill for damages and costs of up to £560,000 after five of its former keyboard operators won compensation for severe cases of repetitive strain injury.

RAILTRACK and the train operating companies were ordered to spend £250 million in safety improvements to protect the public and prevent accidents.

AFTER nine years and £500,000, the Department of Health published a 365-page report that it fervently hopes will snuff out claims of a link between cot death and mattresses.

EIGHT families who lost relatives to Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease after treatment with contaminated human growth hormone won the right to government compensation totalling more than £1 million in the High Court.

THE COMMONS will effectively be barred from attempting to reintroduce the death penalty after a majority of 158, in a free vote, elected to adopt a European protocol that places a constitutional bar on capital punishment.

WILLIAM John Hill, a cousin of the multiple murderer Fred West, was jailed for four years for sex attacks on teenage girls in Herefordshire.

BRITISH beaches became dirtier last year, and Blackpool was the worst, with seven of its eight beaches listed as unsafe for swimming, the European Commission reported.

WOLF MANKOWITZ, the author, playwright and scriptwriter, has died aged 73. His work drew on Yiddish folklore and his own childhood in the East End of London.

Ulster: the end of the beginning

ANALYSIS
John Mullin

THAT, believe it or not, was the easy part. Now the real battles begin, and Northern Ireland is braced for a dirty war. David Trimble, the leader of the Ulster Unionists, scored a resounding victory, and no one should take that from him. There were times, though, when it looked a distant prospect.

The wrath of Ian Paisley and Bob McCartney can be fearsome, and there were mutinous splits in Mr Trimble's party. Sinn Fein's cohesion sent shudders through the Ulster Unionist's Yes campaign.

The British and Irish governments hardly helped. The appearance of the Balcombe Street IRA gang at Sinn Fein's annual conference was an atrocious blunder. The parole of Michael Stone, the loyalist mass killer, was even worse.

Law-abiding unionists viewed his crimes at least as seriously as those of the four members of the Balcombe Street gang, and it served only to fuel fears over the prisoners and the No camp made big inroads.

The Yes lobby only got it right for three days of the campaign. But they were the last three days.

Although the Yes campaign has scored a success, no one can be sure whether most unionist voters backed the deal, and that leaves scope for the Democratic Unionist Party and UK Unionists.

Take their figures first. They say that because unionists attracted 51 per cent of the vote in the past three elections, a 26 per cent No vote meant a majority of unionists rejected the deal. That assumes, heroically, a negligible nationalist No vote.

Mr Trimble defined it differently. He said that 62 per cent of the electorate was Protestant, so the No lobby needed at least 31 per cent. And anyway, he believed several percentage points came from republican hardliners opposed to the deal.

The Northern Ireland Office had yet another calculation. Allowing for 95 per cent of nationalists backing the agreement, a Unionist majority kicked in at 67 per cent. Anything more and the gap widened.

The Sunday Times, in its exit poll, believed unionists backed the deal by 55 to 45 per cent. That just about coincided with the NIO's analysis. So Mr Paisley and Mr McCartney might have been jeered out of the King's Hall in Belfast last Saturday, but the fight for unionism is very much alive.

Ian Paisley: the fight for unionism is still alive PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN LEWIS

Sydney Elliott, professor of politics at Queen's university, calculates that a 29 per cent vote for the two parties on June 25 would create big difficulties for Mr Trimble. That would give the unionist No bloc 30 seats in the 108-seat assembly.

With 30 seats the No bloc could demand that votes are taken on a cross-community basis. That means key decisions must be backed by a 60 per cent weighted majority of members. That figure must include at least 40 per cent of both unionist and nationalist members.

If Mr Trimble fails to ensure the selection of loyal candidates, several Ulster Unionist Party members might join with the DUP and UK Unionists in some votes. Mr Trimble would be left with a constant headache, developing perhaps into paralysis.

However, the Sunday Times exit poll offers Mr Trimble more comfort than Prof Elliott's doomsday scenario. Had the new Northern Ireland assembly been elected last week, it indicates that the DUP would have taken 16 seats and UK Unionists one.

Mr Trimble's Ulster Unionists are — on 31 seats — pipped as the biggest party by a resurgent SDLP, with 32. Sinn Fein is on 15; the Alliance six; the Progressive Unionist Party five; and one each for the Ulster Democratic Party and the Women's Coalition.

After the elections, the assembly's first function will be to decide who the first minister and first deputy minister are in the power-sharing executive. They will be elected on the basis of parallel consent — by a majority of both unionist and nationalists.

But if that sounds sticky, the assembly's next job appears impossible: to form the 12-member power-sharing executive. Each party will be allocated places in proportion to its size in the assembly. It will also have to agree to a duty of service. That is designed to stop the DUP wrecking the cross-border dimension, and it is difficult to see how it could form part of the cabinet.

But Sinn Fein will have two seats; the IRA will not have decommissioned any of its weapons; and Mr Trimble has pledged never to sit with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness until it does.

Mr Blair did much to reassure unionist doubters he was serious that the IRA had to decommission. No doubt he is, but the agreement offers no guarantees.

It is difficult to imagine ways out of this impasse. Unionist doubters are annoyed that there was never any linkage of the effective amnesty programme to decommissioning. But the legislation for the accelerated release of paramilitary prisoners is soon to go through the Commons. That issue is now settled.

The thorny question of RUC reform is on the back burner. Chris Patten, the former Hong Kong governor, will come up with his recommendations in a year's time.

Should the executive get up and running, it will have until October 31 to agree what cross-border bodies should be set up. If it fails to do so — and that is a real possibility — the interdependent nature of the agreement would effectively scupper the assembly.

A British-Irish council seems the least controversial element. It will eventually include representatives from Westminster, the Irish parliament and the Scottish and Welsh assemblies. There will be a long period in which the assembly shadows the six existing Northern Ireland departments. Assuming all crises are negotiated, legislation will establish the assembly and transfer powers from London in January.

That is way beyond the horizon. Last Saturday's result was hardly the end or its beginning. But it was the end of the beginning.

Comment, page 12

Arts Council in revolt

Stuart Millar

A HIGH-PROFILE resignation and the threat of more to come; in Arts Council terms, weeks like last week are rapidly becoming the norm as the open revolt which has engulfed it since it embarked on radical reform continues to escalate.

The arts establishment is braced for yet more resignations after Lady McMillan quit as chairwoman of the council's dance advisory panel in disgust at reform proposals which critics claim pose a threat to the relationship between the council and the organisations it funds.

Her resignation came two days after the 15 members of the drama advisory panel resigned en masse in protest at the reform programme.

They are furious that the council's new chairman, Gerry Robinson, and its chief executive, Peter Hewitt, are to press ahead reforms which will see the chairmen of the 11 advisory panels lose their automatic seats on the council. The chairmen of the 10 regional arts boards will also go, to be replaced by a streamlined council of 10 "generalists" who will have no specific links to any particular art form.

The aim is to make the council function more efficiently by removing the vested interests believed to have clogged up the decision-making process.

There have been frequent complaints from arts organisations that the Arts Council, which distributes £400 million in grant and lottery money annually, has become so unwieldy and bureaucratic that it cannot function effectively.

But while representatives of the individual art forms agree that change was long overdue, they have accused the Government of handing the arts over to bureaucrats while experienced figures working in the arts were frozen out.

Jakarta cancels water deal

John Aglionby in Jakarta and Nicholas Bannister

THAMES Water International became the first foreign casualty of Indonesia's campaign to strip away the nepotistically acquired assets of former President Suharto's family this week when it lost its contract to supply water to half of Jakarta.

Less than three days after Mr Suharto resigned, PAM Jaya, the water regulator for the Indonesian capital, cancelled its co-operation agreement with PT Kakar Thames Airindo (Kati), a joint venture between Thames and the former autocrat's eldest son, Sigit Harjojudanto.

The regulator, the municipal water authority that organised the supply until Kati won the contract, said that the agreement had been reached improperly.

"It was not fair business but monkey business from start to finish," said PAM's managing director, Rama Boedi. "There was no tendering of the contract whatsoever. The whole process was a classic example of collusion and nepotism overriding all other considerations."

The company that was awarded the contract to supply the other half of the city, the French firm Lyonnaise des Eaux — owner of Northumbrian Water — also had its contract cancelled.

A Thames Water spokeswoman said: "It is a country where the way to do business involves influence, and the influencing lines have now changed."

● A £6.6 million scholarship fund to help Asian students at British universities will be announced this week by the Foreign Office in response to the financial collapse in Indonesia, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia.

Support grows for single currency

Alan Travis
and Michael White

SUPPORT in Britain for the single European currency, the euro, has risen sharply in the last month, according to the latest Guardian/ICM opinion poll.

Although Euroscepticism still commands substantial backing in Britain, it has fallen below a majority of 50 per cent for the first time after dropping 13 points in the past month.

Support for the euro has risen by eight points, to 34 per cent — its highest level for three years.

The change of heart appears to have been influenced by the announcement by the 11 other European Union partners that they are definitely joining the single currency next year.

The gap between pro- and anti-euro camps is narrowed if the "don't knows" — many of whom would be expected to become No votes in the promised referendum — are excluded, giving figures of 58 per cent for the antis and 42 per cent for the pros.

For the first time there is now greater support among Labour voters for the euro than those prepared to vote against Britain joining (43 per cent to 38 per cent). Opposition among Tory supporters stands at 60 per cent, but is down from the 73 per cent registered last month.

There is a strong gender difference on the issue. Men now split on whether to join the single currency, with 43 per cent opposed and 41 per cent in favour. Scepticism is much stronger among women, who say that they will vote not to join by 53 per cent to 29 per cent.

Signs that opinion may be on the move will give comfort to ministers who have adopted a "we might join, but not yet" position. The strong current Euroscepticism in the electorate has led the Government to put the question of the single currency referendum firmly on the back-burner.

But as this latest poll shows, the further the rest of the EU travels down the road to the single currency, so opposition to the euro in Britain may well weaken.

Meanwhile the Conservative leader, William Hague, revealed the depth of his hostility to further European integration when he warned that the single currency represents "1950s solutions for the problems of the 1940s", and could wreck the stability of the entire continent.

"The single currency is irreversible. One could find oneself trapped in the economic equivalent of a burning building with no exits," he predicted in terms which delighted his Eurosceptic supporters and horrified the beleaguered pro-single-currency wing of his party.

Speaking last week in Fontainebleau, outside Paris, Mr Hague argued that the post-war consensus in favour of economic, strategic and political integration in Europe was outdated in a globalised hi-tech world — along with the interventionist "big-state" mindset which accompanied it.

His speech prompted a scalding backlash from the Conservative former deputy prime minister, Michael Heseltine. "He is in danger of losing a very important part of the Conservative party — the centre ground — and you can't win unless you come from the centre ground," he said.

In contrast to Tony Blair, who is courting EU leaders and British public opinion in favour of eventual membership of the euro, Mr Hague ended a day of talks with President Jacques Chirac and other French leaders by declaring in favour of "diversity, pluralism" and the nation state.

Waiting lists for hospitals hit new high

David Brindle and John Carvel

HOSPITALS were last week given 10 months to cut their waiting lists dramatically, as the total list for England hit a new high, fractionally below 1.3 million.

Health leaders said meeting the tough targets would mean opening operating theatres at night and weekends.

The targets are the means by which ministers hope to honour their commitments to get the total list below the level they inherited by next March — a cut of 167,000 — and then to achieve a further cut of 100,000 before the next general election.

The Department of Health said more than one in five of all those waiting had been given a date for treatment. Compared with a year previously, however, the total list was up 12 per cent.

Stephen Thornton, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents health authorities and trusts, said the £500 million provided by the Government for cutting waiting lists "means using theatres on evenings and weekends, persuading doctors, nurses and technicians to work extra hours and finding enough hospital beds and community nurses to care for people at home after an operation".

He warned: "The intense focus on waiting lists risks skewing clinical priorities and draining resources from other areas of the NHS, like high-quality cancer and mental health services, that people also care deeply about."

A day after the Department of Health announced lengthening hospital waiting lists, the Department for Education and Employment produced figures showing worsening overcrowding in the early years of primary school.

The Government reaffirmed its core manifesto commitment to eliminate overcrowding in the face of disturbing evidence that the number of five- to seven-year-olds in classes of 31 or more has grown to record proportions since the election.

It blamed the result on the Tory government's final public spending settlement which determined local education authority budgets in the spring of 1997 and influenced how many teachers were in their posts when the census was taken in January.

The effect of Gordon Brown's budgets — including £62 million to recruit 1,500 more infant teachers and build 600 extra classrooms — will not be felt until the start of the next school year in September.

Stephen Byers, the school standards minister, said Labour's manifesto promise to limit all infant classes to 30 or fewer would be achieved by September 2001 — six months ahead of schedule.

"We can guarantee to parents that this is the final chapter in the saga of ever-increasing infant class sizes. The book is now closed on infant classes being more a question of crowd control rather than a valuable learning experience," he said.

There were more than 1.4 million primary pupils in January in classes of 31 or more. The proportion has risen steadily, from under 24 per cent in 1990 to 35 per cent this year, as public funding failed to keep pace with the growth in pupil numbers.

MPs stand up to child labour

Lucy Ward

MULTINATIONAL companies last week admitted they had no specific rules to prevent child labour and in some countries could not guarantee equal opportunities for women.

Four global giants — BP, Shell, Rio Tinto and Unilever — came under pressure from MPs despite insisting that their stand on human rights had in some cases forced them to sacrifice business.

The Commons foreign affairs select committee called for evidence as part of an inquiry focusing on foreign policy and human rights.

Sir John Stanley, Conservative MP for Tonbridge and Malling, pressed the companies on whether they insisted on a global minimum age for employees.

Richard Newton, BP's director for Europe, admitted that the firm, which has workers in more than 70 countries, had no worldwide minimum age applied across the board. But he said: "We do through our support of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and the recognition that the use of child labour is an abuse of human rights, respect that, and we would want to implement that in all our operations."

Guy Walker, UK national manager of Unilever, which employs 250,000 people outside Britain, including tea plantation workers in Kenya and Sri Lanka, said the firm's lack of a minimum age policy was an "area of concern".

The corporations said they were obliged to respect religious laws and customs which in some countries outlawed women's employment.

All four insisted their subsidiaries did not offer bribes to secure business and said their ethical stance had, in some cases, lost them business.

Robin Aram, head of external affairs at Shell, which does business in Nigeria, pointed out: "Speaking up on human rights does not come without cost."

Partners in crime, page 23



Sitting comfortably . . . A solid cast-iron figure, one of 60 installed at the Royal Academy courtyard in London by Angel of The North sculptor Antony Gormley. The figures, moulded from the artist's body, give the impression of the aftermath of an urban disaster in a work called Critical Mass PHOTO: MARTIN GODWIN

Spy claim gives twist to Aitken affair

Luke Harding
and David Pallister

THE Jonathan Aitken affair took a bizarre turn last week when it was claimed that the former cabinet minister lied over his Paris Ritz bill to conceal his role as a secret government intelligence intermediary.

A lengthy report in the Daily Telegraph under the headline, "I lied for my country, says Aitken", appeared on the day that he was charged with perjury and perverting the course of justice.

The decision to prosecute follows the collapse of his libel action against the Guardian last year and the arrest of the ex-MP, his 17-year-old daughter Victoria, and his close friend, the Lebanese-born businessman Said Ayas, who is also charged with perverting the course of justice.

However, despite the clear involvement of Mr Aitken and his friends in the 5,000-word Telegraph story, he then rebutted the claim in subsequent letters to the Times and Telegraph, and said reports that he had lied for his country were only a mitigating factor rather than a defence against the accusations.

His evidence in his libel case was to prevent intelligence links from being exposed, the Telegraph explained in an article by Mr Aitken's friend, Lord Pearson.

But Mr Aitken later said: "Although Lord Pearson's article fairly interprets my original motives for deceiving the Guardian, I have never suggested, nor will I suggest, that this explanation is anything other than a mitigating factor. I have no intention of using it as a defence to the allegation that I told a lie on oath during my libel case."

In his letter to the Times, Mr Aitken repeats that he would not use the intelligence connection in his defence, but omits to say that it could be a mitigating factor.

These developments come after the Crown Prosecution Service announced that Mr Aitken faced criminal charges after an 11-month police investigation. The former minister and Said Ayas were charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and perverting the course of justice. Mr Aitken was additionally charged with perjury.

The charges relate to the two men's accounts of who paid for Mr Aitken's weekend stay in the Paris Ritz Hotel in 1993, when Mr Aitken was a defence minister.

A draft statement by Mr Ayas, leaked to the Telegraph, sets out in detail Mr Aitken's supposed MI6 activities, which were apparently connived at by John Major, then prime minister, and Sir Colin McColl, the former head of MI6.

Lord Pearson claimed that Mr Aitken's evidence about who paid his Ritz bill was at the instigation of the Saudis. The rightwing Conservative peer also suggested that the former minister met MI6's Middle East intelligence director 11 times.

Yet in a letter to the Times last October Mr Aitken dismissed the idea that he worked for British intelligence as a "dotty suggestion". Referring to the former cabinet secretary, he wrote: "Sir Robert Armstrong gave me written confirmation of the fact that I had never been involved in work for MI6."

Files that hide a chaotic immigration system

Alan Travis examines a process that condemns thousands of refugees in Britain to years of misery

AN AMBITIOUS and rising young Home Office minister, Mike O'Brien, this month gave the first real hint of how Britain's Labour government intends to deal with an immigration system it has already condemned as being in a complete shambles. The heart of that crisis lies in the backlog of about 76,000 asylum seekers who are waiting, some for years, for a final decision to be taken on their cases. The worst are to be found among the thick pile of paper files in the civil service filing cabinets marked "Tubby Files" in offices at London's Heathrow airport.

Nearly 10,000 of these people have been waiting since 1992 to learn their fate. Mr O'Brien confirmed this month that families whose cases had not been resolved within seven years of their applications to stay would be considered for "exceptional leave to remain" in an attempt to give the Immigration and Nationality Department some hope of getting on top of the backlog.

Despite accepting that the system has been reduced to a shambles, ministers are keen to resist calling Mr O'Brien's statement an "amnesty" because they believe that would be seen as rewarding lawbreakers and might encourage others to abuse and undermine Britain's asylum procedure.

They are already extremely nervous about how his statement will play. Ever since the election, planted news stories have appeared in the rightwing press designed to demonstrate that Labour is tough on immigration. In June last year the Daily Mail told its readers: "Straw [Home Secretary Jack Straw] set to kick out thousands of illegals." At the same time the Daily Telegraph proclaimed on its front page: "Labour to send back 50,000 migrants." Earlier this year the Mail On Sunday even erroneously claimed that a blanket amnesty for a presumably different 50,000 people was being planned.

Ministers have openly started to prepare the ground by pointing out publicly that the Conservatives themselves gave "exceptional leave to remain" (ELR) to 15,232 people in 1992 alone without trumpeting the policy.

Labour ministers now pointedly ask if that was "a Tory amnesty or the pragmatic granting of ELR to cut the backlog?" In many cases the decision to grant exceptional leave to remain is taken for humanitarian reasons. The Home Office now publicly states that applicants will also be allowed to stay in Britain if there is not a decision on their case within seven years — a policy which has been in effect for more than a decade.

It is against this background that the recent hardline posture taken against Czech Roma and Kosovan asylum seekers arriving at Dover, and warnings about the increasing use of detention should be seen. This newly toughened approach has been laced with some tender liberalism. The iniquitous "primary purpose rule" which split up genuine marriages has been abolished, and the confidential rule books and country reports which guide immigration decisions are to be published for the first time. Appeal rights for visitors stopped from coming to Britain for family weddings and funerals are also to be restored.

But underlying this "firm but fair" approach to immigration politics lies a flirtation by Jack Straw with the perennial question posed by rightwing backbenchers and tabloid newspapers: "Yes," they ask, "but how many illegal immigrants are there really in Britain today?"

Ever since this particular numbers game became a populist occupation around the time of Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech in 1968, the Home Office has refused to join in the sport. "It is not possible to determine whether a person is in Britain without permission until they have been interviewed," is the official response.

The Immigration Service says the number of illegal entrants found trying to enter Britain clandestinely was stable until the early months of this year, when they suddenly increased sharply. But the Home Office believes that this sudden surge had more to do with sniffer dogs and better detection techniques at British ports and less to do with a new influx. They say that they now pick up 50 per cent of clandestine entries at ports where before they were only catching 20 per cent.

In opposition Labour toyed with the idea of scrapping this policy of refusing to estimate the number of illegals. In an unpublished policy document, Labour argued that headlines and theories were no substitute for well-considered action and practice. It said: "We need to seriously address the failures of the system, rather than use it as a cheap political football, and have an informed debate about priorities.

"For example, it is time to put a stop to inflammatory speculation with accurate research. It is astonishing that after 17 years in government the Home Office [under the Conservatives] has not sponsored any proper research into the scale of illegal immigration. Labour will commission the necessary research."

Although Mr O'Brien promised a detailed review of the immigration system by July, ministers now seem to regard such an exercise with some suspicion: "By the nature of the problem, we do not know, and estimates may be misleading . . . Provisional figures for 1997 show that 14,150 people were traced and served with illegal entry papers, but many of them may have entered in previous years," Mr O'Brien recently told the Commons.

This business of how many failed asylum seekers and illegal entrants actually left the country is the really hot potato. Tory MPs point out that 250,000 people have applied for political asylum in Britain over the past 10 years, and official figures show that 10,700 have been granted asylum and 13,000 deported. "Where are the other 226,300?" they ask.

This ignores the 76,000 people whose cases are still stuck in the backlog, and that some 5,000 a year are granted exceptional leave to remain. The Home Office believes that a further 17,000 have absconded and some 19,000 are awaiting their removal.

Mr O'Brien has promised to speed up the process of removals of failed asylum seekers and illegal entrants. He has argued that although ministers in the last Conservative government doubled the number of deportation orders they signed, the numbers removed from Britain actually fell.

It is impossible to know how many people actually leave Britain each year because of Home Office action. Some observers estimate that about 250,000 asylum seekers have settled in London since 1990 — that's about half the number Germany has been taking in each year.

Most are in Britain legally and many are banned from claiming social security benefits. Little official effort has gone into the problems they face in settling into a new country. But it is a testimony to the multicultural nature of British society that such an influx has been absorbed without any major racist explosions. Except, that is, for an explosion in London's restaurant and music scenes.

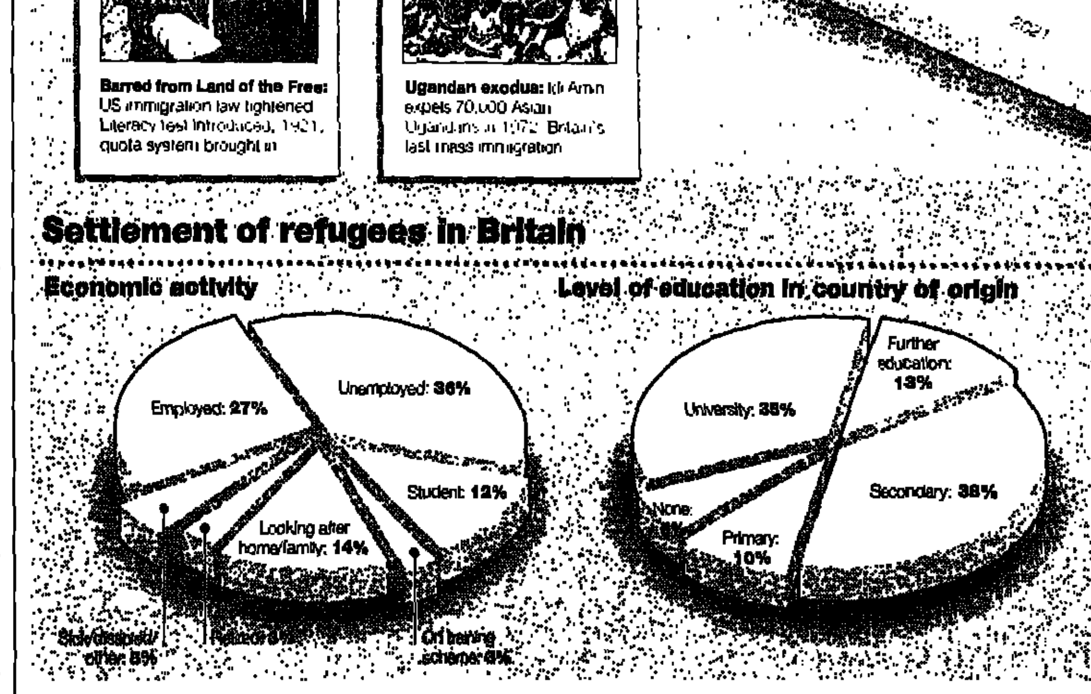




ILLUSTRATION: FINNBAR SHEEHY

Seeking a new life

Asylum applications in UK, by country, 1997

Country	Applications
Somalia	2,730
Former Yugoslavia	2,245
Former USSR	2,015
China	1,945
Sri Lanka	1,830
Pakistan	1,615
Nigeria	1,480
Turkey	1,445
Colombia	1,330
India	1,285
Other African countries	3,830
Former Soviet bloc	2,705
Rest of world	4,990

Asylum decisions, 1997

Decision	Number
Asylum refused	28,945
Asylum granted	3,985
Exceptional leave granted	3,115

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 31 1998

Eyes on the Irish prize

THE FUTURE took on the past in Northern Ireland — and won. Ranged on one side were the bitternesses of a 30 years' war, the memories and hurt that refused to go away. Ranged on the other were fatigue with a futile conflict, the realisation that no one could ever win the battle of Ulster and that it was best for the two communities who share that land to live in it together. On one side were Ian Paisley and his prophets of doom, bellowing a loud, long No. On the other was perhaps the unlikeliest coalition ever assembled: Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionists, U2 singer Bono and a former chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Bill Clinton and William Hague, Richard Branson and the Balcombe Street gang, Tony Blair and the loyalist prisoners of the Maze. They all said Yes to the Good Friday agreement, and last weekend's referendum result saw them recruit the most crucial ally of all to their coalition: the people of Northern Ireland themselves. More than 70 per cent said the word loud and clear: Yes.

There are disputes as to the exact proportion of unionists who voted that way. The Paisleyites bend the figures to argue that the 71-to-29 per cent victory margin means a majority of unionists voted No. David Trimble reckons the number of unionist recalcitrants is closer to 35 per cent. Since people did not cast their votes with colour-coded ballot papers of orange and green, we shall never know for sure. But maybe we don't need to. For one thing, as Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, pointed out after hearing the result, a 3-1 victory hardly needs a replay. More deeply, if the people's verdict means anything, it surely reveals a desire to escape from the old sectarianism.

So what happens next? Next month Northern Ireland voters go to the polls again, to elect the new assembly approved by the referendum. The politicians of the province must be the most exhausted in the democratic world: no sooner had they finished their all-night marathon talks that culminated in agreement, than they were plunged into a long referendum campaign. Now they have to find new energies — to win a role in Northern Ireland's first attempt at self-rule in a generation.

Sinn Fein showed its usual political guile by striking first. Gerry Adams's offer of an electoral pact with the SDLP was briskly snubbed by John Hume — who believes he needs no help from anybody after seeing polls that tip his party to be the largest single entity in the new body. Still, he risked looking narrow and partisan while Mr Adams scored PR points by casting himself as a nationalist unifier, a man seeking to end the old infighting. For relative newcomers to democratic politics, Sinn Fein are extremely good at it.

Mr Adams's second move was, once again, to ask David Trimble to talk to him face to face, something the Ulster Unionist leader has steadfastly refused to do. Those who want an outbreak of peace, love and harmony in Belfast may wish Mr Trimble would reach out a symbolic hand, but they can hardly blame him for refusing. He wants to give no quarter to his hardline critics within unionism, the erstwhile leaders of the No campaign.

Mr Trimble is right to worry. Many unionist waverers may be glad that the agreement went through and that the assembly is on its way — but now think they should pack the body with tough guys, just to keep it on the pro-union rails. They may believe that the presence of Mr Paisley and his nit-picking *confrère*, the UK Unionist MP Robert McCartney, will block the Sinn Fein crowd from wielding too much influence. An assembly with a strong Paisleyite hue may strike some unionists as the best of both worlds.

But that would be a big mistake. The No campaigners have made it clear that their role in such a body will be as wreckers. They now have a political, even personal interest in proving that they were right all along — and that shared rule cannot work. Unionists took a great step forward last week. They should not take a step back by voting for the agreement's would-be saboteurs on June 25.

All sides need to adopt the same attitude to the other rejectionists who remain bent on undoing the good work. The men of terror on both sides have not gone away. Last Sunday a bomb was found under a railway bridge in a nationalist district of southwest Belfast, amid fears that the Loyalist Volunteer Force could soon call off the ceasefire it announced in the last stages of the referendum campaign. In this atmosphere, there are useful gestures the pro-agreement forces could make. Gerry Adams could talk more of his desire to bring the war to an end. David Trimble could lean on the Orange Order not to send its annual march at Drumcree on July 12 down the nationalist Garvaghy Road. Both moves would help focus Ulster eyes on the prize of co-operation.

For now, all the people who brought Northern Ireland to this moment of possibility deserve some congratulation — from the province's politicians to the former paramilitaries, the Irish government to the Clinton administration, from John Major to Ms Mowlam. Mr Blair deserves special credit: his presence last week reassured unionists just as they lurched dangerously close to a No vote. After referendum successes in Scotland, Wales and London Mr Blair can now boast a four-out-of-four victory run — but this is the one that mattered most.

Quiet triumph for democracy

EVERYONE can take satisfaction from the Hong Kong elections, and the supporters of democracy most of all. The result shows beyond a shadow of doubt that where the voters can cast their votes directly, the great majority will choose candidates who are committed to a fully democratic system. This ballot for the one-third of seats in the Legislative Council chosen by direct elections is the only sure test of Hong Kong public opinion. It has produced a resounding victory for Martin Lee, his Democratic party, and the outspoken independents associated with the same cause. And it is a result that the Chinese government, now in a more forward-looking mood, would be well advised to consider positively.

In doing so, Beijing may legitimately regard the result as a success for its policies too. What better proof that it is honouring the "one country two systems" arrangement than an election won — in the area directly contested — by some of the Chinese government's most outspoken critics? Of course there has been some tilting towards Beijing by the Hong Kong élite — just as it used to tilt towards London. There is also more self-censorship in the Hong Kong press, although a good deal of criticism continues to be expressed. But Chinese officials have refrained visibly from interfering in Hong Kong, and the notion abroad that "things have changed" irreversibly is simply not true.

Hong Kong's chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, is also entitled to claim the election as a success. The complex electoral system he introduced was generally regarded as a disincentive to vote. It was taken almost for granted that the poll would barely match the 35 per cent of registered voters in the last, British-run election of 1995. Yet Hong Kongers defied both predictions and torrential rain to turn out in numbers far greater than were ever achieved under British rule. Some of those votes may have been cast to punish Mr Tung for rewriting the rules, but many seem to have expressed a patriotic view that, in the first election under Chinese rule, Hong Kongers had a duty to make it a success.

Will China and the Hong Kong establishment draw the right conclusion? There are still those ageing conservatives in Beijing who throw a fit at the mention of Mr Lee, and who cannot forget that the students in Tiananmen Square were calling for democracy too. Tsang Yok-sing, the independent-minded leader of the pro-Chinese Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), offered some good advice to such people. He hoped China would learn that "democratic elections don't necessarily lead to chaos [or] to confrontation between the elected people and the government".

The issue now is the timetable for the transition to a Legislative Council which is fully chosen — in the words of the Chinese Basic Law governing Hong Kong — by "universal suffrage". At present the Law provides for a review after 2007 (by which time half the seats will be directly elected) to decide how to achieve the aim. Hong Kong officials are describing this result as a solid foundation for that review: indeed few dispute that there will be full democracy, if not in 2007, then soon after. The question raised by this election is whether it should be introduced earlier. At any rate Hong Kong politics, after a troubling transition, seems in unexpectedly good shape. That is a result of which everyone can be in favour.

Chaos at the shrine of Crocodile Hole

Martin Woollacott

CROCODILE HOLE is the evil-sounding name of the place near Jakarta where six Indonesian generals were murdered in the failed coup attempt that led to the replacement of Sukarno by Suharto.

After the troubles, it became a shrine. Visitors remove their shoes before passing in front of reliefs showing the war against the Dutch, Sukarno studying a book while plotters lurk in the background, the generals being tortured by communist women, and the arrival, in the nick of time, of General Suharto and his armoured cars. The reliefs do not show the later massacres of several hundred thousand followers of the communists, many of them killed by young Muslim activists. But they are a powerful statement of the basic principle of his regime, which is that Indonesian society, because of its ethnic, religious, and class divisions, will, if left to itself, collapse into anarchy and even civil war.

The difficulties of speaking frankly in an unfree society, and perhaps some Javanese preference for indirection, have meant that these matters have for years been discussed in a strange jargon made up of acronyms and generalities.

Concepts such as "Sara", for example, which is shorthand for "Suku, Ras, Agama, Antar Golangan", the ban on provoking ethnic, racial, religious, or class troubles, abound. The journalist Goenawan Mohammad years ago wrote an essay called A Thousand Slogans And One Poem, in which he deplored the way in which the regime's propaganda had made everything into a dull code. Yet it is a code that has some meaning. Pancasila, the founding Indonesian ideology, combines belief in God, humanitarianism, national unity, consensus democracy, and social justice. It is a shambolic intellectual structure within which factions inside the regime, its defenders and critics have for years manoeuvred. This, with the counterpoint of violence on the streets and the regime's own violence against its opponents, has been Indonesian politics under Suharto.

Whether those politics have prepared the country for a transition to a pluralist and democratic system or whether they have damaged that possibility is a question the next few months will answer. Suharto has left a legacy of division on two levels. His kind of development widened the gaps between the classes, and, in its collapse, has damaged all but the very rich. His kind of politics also widened gaps between different groups and institutions, notably the military and one wing of politically active Muslims. The divisions could dangerously interact.

As Suharto's comrades of the 1945 generation passed into retirement, the armed forces lost the lion's share of important civil posts and of the state sector economy.

The generals remained privileged and important, but had clearly lost ground. Suharto had already buttressed his position on the economic front by an alliance with Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs. Later he reinforced his position politically by encouraging an Islamic movement that co-operated closely with the regime.

Members of that movement, embodied in the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals' Association (ICMI), founded in 1990, sought to use Suharto even as he used them. Their hope was, by penetrating the government, bureaucracy and educational system, to create an Islamic society. Other Muslims, including the prominent moderate Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid, criticised this programme as thinly disguising the real objective of an Islamic state.

Some ICMI stalwarts also took up the idea of proportionalism in government, meaning that Muslims should get the 90 per cent of government and civil service posts to which their proportion of the population "entitled" them, and of affirmative action in the economy meaning that Muslims should get a helping hand from Sino-Indonesian businessmen, on the Malaysian model. Men with Islamist ideas were even promoted within the military, although they remain a minority. Unsurprisingly, the ICMI people were in favour of Suharto carrying on in power in 1993, while a number of retired service officers, many secular politicians, and leaders of the much larger and more moderate Muslim association, the Nahdlatul Ulama, were not.

THE MOST serious tension created by Suharto's manoeuvres in the nineties is that between the military and the new Muslim activists, so it is interesting that the men of the moment in Indonesia are the new president B J Habibie, a not entirely serious figure who is nevertheless a leader, Amien Rais, also a member of ICMI but one who turned very recently against Suharto, and General Wiranto, the commander of the armed forces.

Rais has fulminated against "Christianisation" and attacked Suharto's economic policies because good Muslims were not getting their share of economic action. The enthusiasm of some Muslim activists for "democracy" may well be linked to the idea that they would be the overwhelming victors in a free election and the natural and permanent masters thereafter.

Suharto's political legacy is thus as problematic as his economic one. A reassertion of the political powers of the military, the pursuit of an Islamic state, or some kind of trade-off between Islamists and the army are not happy prospects. Fortunately, there is a substantial moderate Muslim movement, and there are significant secular and democratic political groups that have survived within the artificial party set-up that Suharto imposed, as well as a whole new sector of democratically inclined non-governmental organisations.

There may also be officers, who, while unwilling to give up the idea of a special and legitimate political role for the forces, understand that they cannot occupy as large a place in the scheme of things as in the past.

Together, they should have a chance of trying to prove that Indonesia can have free politics without falling into the chaos that the Crocodile Hole symbolises.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 31 1998

France ran covert operation in Rwanda

Jacques Isnard

A SENIOR French general has admitted that France ran a covert operation in Rwanda between 1990 and 1993 to help the Kigali army cope with attacks by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

General Christian Quesnot, who was President François Mitterrand's chief-of-staff at the Elysée palace, was part of the special unit that managed crises in Africa. Testifying on May 19 before the parliamentary commission looking into French involvement in the Rwandan war, he said that before Operation Turquoise France had trained the regular Rwandan army (consisting of 5,200 men in the early 1990s) in the use of armoured vehicles, cannon and helicopters.

At the height of what was known as Operation Noroît, which involved sending two French companies to Rwanda between 1990 and 1993 to ensure the safety of foreign nationals, France assigned military intelligence and action units for duty with the Rwandan army in order to help them fight the Ugandan-backed RPF.

Before Operation Noroît was reinforced with the addition of 400 paratroopers, the French Military Co-operation Mission (MMC) had about 30 specialists. These officers and NCOs, generally stationed for two years with their families, had a twofold task: to train army personnel and to provide maintenance and repairs for the army's French-made military equipment.

The unit was gradually expanded, and the new mission was named Operation Panda. At the end of 1992, the number of officers assigned to Panda was doubled, and 40 more were added in the following year. The detachments came mainly from three regiments forming the Rapid Action Force.

The task of these new arrivals was, bluntly, to support the Rwandan army in two training camps located close to the Ugandan border in the north, near the front line. These officers were to train soldiers in the use of armoured vehicles and 105mm guns.

Equipped for night fighting and possessing powerful long-distance transmission facilities, these men were to remain in constant touch with the highest political and military authorities in Paris, who were managing the crises in Africa. They could, if necessary, bypass the usual chain of command.

This is precisely what happened in Rwanda: a direct, coded line of communication was established between the regiment on the ground and the Elysée via the army command and the presidential office, where the whole operation was managed by a crisis group that included General Quesnot and Colonel Jean-Pierre Huchon.

The commando structure was dismantled just before April 1994, when France had to rush a 400-strong force of paratroopers to evacuate about 1,500 French and other foreign nationals from the country as the RPF advanced on Kigali.



'Go to the river bank and wait till it gets dark'
'Sir, your right arm hasn't been blacked up'

Detachments taking part in the Panda mission were suspected of exceeding their brief and crossing into Uganda, as some commando troops later boasted, in search of evidence of Kampala's military involvement with the RPF. Eyewitnesses have reported that they saw French soldiers, rather than President Juvénal Habyarimana's soldiers, operating Rwandan army artillery.

Panda also provided the French with an opportunity to co-operate with the Rwandan secret service, which used photographs and documents purporting to show RPF atrocities against the people and the presence of regular Ugandan army soldiers in Rwanda.

In documents produced in March 1993, for example, there are references to identity papers "found by chance", it is claimed, of five Ugandan officers and five soldiers killed in fighting in Rwanda, in a vehicle with Ugandan markings.

The Military Assistance and Training Detachments served as a laboratory for setting up, from 1993, a chain of command specific to military intelligence and action, with the creation of a special operations command under the army chief-of-staff's direct authority.

(May 21)

Death adds to murder mystery plot

Christine Legrand in Buenos Aires

ARGENTINES are bewildered by the death on May 20 of Alfredo Yabrán, aged 53, a shadowy figure and one of the country's most powerful businessmen. He was suspected of being the brains behind the murder on January 25, 1997, of José Luis Cabezas, a photo-journalist for Noticias magazine, whose charred body, handcuffed and with a bullet in his head, was found on wasteland near the Atlantic beach resort of Pinamar.

Yabrán had not been heard of since May 16 when he fled an arrest warrant issued by Judge José Luis Macchi, who is investigating the Cabezas murder. Hiding out in his home province of Entre Rios, in one of the many *estancias* (large estates) that he owned in Argentina, the businessman is reported to have put a gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger just as the police were closing in to arrest him.

The former wife of a police officer who is serving a prison term for involvement in the photographer's killing declared on May 15 that "Yabrán had ordered my husband to kill Cabezas because he [Yabrán] couldn't stand being photographed".

News of Yabrán's death has shocked the political establishment, but both government and opposition are reacting cautiously pending confirmation by a post-mortem examination of the police inquiry's preliminary findings.



Businessman Yabrán, left, who is reported to have shot himself, was suspected of ordering the death of photographer Cabezas, right

Domingo Cavallo, an opposition member and a former economy minister who was Yabrán's sworn enemy, nevertheless declared that the businessman had long "benefited from the protection of judges, police and [President] Carlos Menem's government".

It was Cavallo who, in 1995, focused public attention on Yabrán by accusing him at an open Congress sitting of being the "head of a criminal organisation rooted inside the government". Cavallo, who had been serving as a minister since 1991 and was perceived as the architect of the country's economic recovery, was dismissed in July 1996 by Menem.

Meanwhile an issue of Noticias magazine carried a cover photo of Yabrán, nicknamed "The Invisible Man" because he went to such pains to stay out of reach of the photographer's lens. The picture showing Yabrán and his wife strolling along Pinamar beach was the first time the businessman's picture had appeared in the press, and was credited to José Luis Cabezas. Ten months later, the photographer was dead.

Argentine society was deeply moved by the killing which, in view of a presidential election scheduled for 1999, triggered an out-and-out war between Menem and Eduardo Duhalde, governor of Buenos Aires province. After several members of the province's police force were implicated, Duhalde had to order a drastic purge of the security services.

The investigations also revealed the possible involvement of a group in which police officers worked alongside bodyguards employed by Yabrán. At the time, the governor advised Yabrán to "get himself a good lawyer".

Yabrán, like Menem of Syrian origin, has succeeded in keeping his personal history and business affairs shrouded in secrecy. He is said to have been worth $500 million. But what were his relations with the government? That is a question which is likely to remain unanswered.

During the Argentine dictatorship between 1976 and 1983, the former computer salesman is said to have fronted for a number of companies connected with the military regime. With the restoration of democracy, he maintained good relations with Raúl Alfonsín's government and later with his successor, Menem. It was during the latter's presidency that rumour credited him with being at the head of a vast holding controlling, in particular, the privatised postal service and the manufacture of passports.

Yabrán had always denied that there was any such empire and claimed that he was an ordinary businessman victimised by political "manipulation".

Despite the suspicions hanging over him in connection with the murder of Cabezas, he was received at the Casa Rosada — the presidential palace — last June. The public was scandalised by the visit, which was interpreted as an expression of government support. At the time, Yabrán was a smiling, self-confident man who declared that in his view "power is synonymous with impunity".

Commenting on Yabrán's death, Cavallo said: "If President Menem had initiated an investigation as I did, the loss of many lives could have been avoided."

(May 22)

Dictatorship not yet dead in Indonesia

EDITORIAL

THE dictator has gone, but can his dictatorship survive? This is the big question the Indonesian people will have to settle if they are to wrench themselves free of Suharto's poisoned legacy. After 32 years of absolute rule, the general/president has stepped down in a manner that is, at least, less dramatic than the bloody circumstances in which he came to power.

The violent incidents of recent days, evoking memories of the anti-Chinese massacres in the 1960s, have hastened the emergence, both in Indonesia and abroad, of a peaceful scenario designed to stave off the worst — at least for the time being. But will it remain peaceful? Indonesia has the misfortune of being a country that can conceal extreme violence beneath a bewitching exterior.

The solution that has been adopted — nominating Suharto's closest political crony to succeed him — is probably just as short-term as it is unsatisfactory. The man is finished, but his system lives on. The job of making the country democratic, if only to bring it in line with minimal international standards of plurality and freedom, has yet to be started.

It is up to the Indonesians to establish the basis of a state where the law prevails and which is likely to satisfy the expectations of the world's most populous Muslim nation. In such an undertaking, religion can play a more positive part than at first glance seems possible.

The failure of the political community, kept under tight control in Suharto's time, to come up with proposals for a society matching the people's expectations has led to the responsibility for such an onerous task being laid at the door of the leaders of the Muslim community — in much the same way as it was for Poland's Roman Catholic Church in the last days of communism. But much may also depend on the support such a transformation receives from abroad.

The role played by the United States in helping to ease tension in Indonesia and the lack of determination that it and the rest of the international community are showing in other unstable situations makes for a striking contrast. Indonesia is proof positive that an internal crisis likely to have potentially worrying international repercussions can be influenced by external powers.

It wouldn't be a bad thing for the US, and the West in general, to remember that when dealing with the Middle East or China. Do suffering communities have to wait for an economic crisis that threatens the stability of a region, and perhaps the global market, before the West shows any concern?

(May 22)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY May 31 1998

The jury's in on Guillem's dance

Dominique Frétard

THIS year, for the first time, the president of the jury at Lorrina Niklas's Rencontres Chorégraphiques de Seine-Saint-Denis, a major international competition for young choreographers, was a dancer — and some dancer at that: Sylvie Guillem.

Usually the jury is headed by a famous choreographer, who presents a work by his or her company on the festival's opening night. Earlier presidents of the jury since the festival started in 1988 have included Lucinda Childs, Merce Cunningham, Jan Fabre, Ushio Amagatsu and Mathilde Monnier.

One wondered what was expected of Guillem, who, of course, is not a choreographer, but one of the top ballerinas of the late 20th century. Should she dance? Although not obliged to do so, she decided to don her ballet shoes and was visibly delighted to perform — a sign, one suspects, of a great dancer.

She chose to dance Ten Blisters, a ballet choreographed by David Kern. Kern was also Guillem's partner on stage, along with Marc Spradling. Kern and Spradling are two Americans who used to dance with William Forsythe's company, probably the only company in the world where Guillem might have carved out a career for herself.

But Forsythe does not use soloists. Guillem, now aged 33, realised she needed to build up her own balletic family around herself if she were not to end up like Garbo, venerated, but lost to her art.

Guillem would never have been prepared to rehearse to the point of overkill the great roles of classical dance, which for her are too cut off from the real world. To be able to keep dancing, she has had to scout around and find a way of integrating into her era, of leaving a stamp on her contemporaries. It is no easy task to smash one's own icon.

Ten Blisters is about 10 toes, their blisters and 10 pieces of sticking plaster. In other words, 10 causes of suffering. Although only a debutant choreographer, Kern has understood one essential fact: Guillem has an enormous sense of comedy. She stands somewhere between Petrushka, the broken puppet, and Charlie Chaplin.

No one knows better than she does what is involved in being a ballerina — a long succession not only of blisters, but of tours and hotel rooms. This sordid nomadism is represented on stage by cardboard boxes of the kind used by the homeless, while its obverse, fame, is symbolised by a red carpet.

Kern did not tailor the ballet specifically for Guillem. Had he done so, it would have become a purely commercial venture. Instead, he composed a genuine piece of choreography in which the ballerina has her proper place. She is a whirlwind of genius who turns up when she is least expected, disrupting everything with the mysterious power of her legs and her spins.

The most successful moments are the few seconds between the arrival of the ballerina on stage and the moment when she gets into step with the two male dancers. It is fascinating to observe how, when she executes the same steps as her partners, both of whom also have a classical ballet background, she produces something startlingly different: her body is "aerodynamic".

Ten Blisters could be described as sub-Forsythe. It is not spellbinding all the time, and the use of Bach's Concerto for organ in A minor and Haydn's Concerto for cello and orchestra in C major — they ironically underline the dancer's suffering — is a trifle too systematic.

But Kern is skilful when working in a mode of construction/deconstruction, such as when Guillem freezes a step in full flight and struts nonchalantly into the wings with her gymnast's gait (she was a gymnast before becoming a dancer).

After this triumphant opening work, the festival showed the work of some outstanding young choreographers, such as the up-and-coming star Barak Marshall, a young Israeli with a Harvard degree. He is on the bill of the American Dance Festival this summer, the Lyon Biennale in September and the Paris Festival d'Automne. The work he presented was Emma Goldman's Wedding.

(May 15)

Sylvie Guillem was visibly delighted to perform at the festival

Lyrical score gives new life to silent classic

CANNES FESTIVAL
Jean-Luc Douin

TO CELEBRATE the 30th anniversary of the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs section of the Cannes Film Festival (which ended last weekend), its organiser, Pierre-Henri Deleau, decided to give the Cinémathèque Française a slot during the festival in which it would be able to project one of its recently restored silent films with a specially composed musical score. Part of the deal was that Deleau would finance the score.

He and the Cinémathèque decided that the work in question should be The Man Who Laughs (1928), a rarely shown American film by the German-born director, Paul Leni.

The film, adapted from a novel by Victor Hugo, is set in 17th century England. It tells the story of the son of an aristocrat who has fallen on bad times. The boy's face has been disfigured by white slave traders specialising in the trafficking of children. In order to turn the boy into a fairground attraction, they have enlarged his mouth so it reaches his ears and leaves him with a permanent rictus.

Once he has grown up, Gwynplaine is exhibited as "the man who laughs" with an angelic partner, the divinely beautiful, blind, Dea, who loves him with all her heart. He passionately wants to marry her.

As a result of the intrigues of a satanic jester, Gwynplaine's true identity is revealed to the queen, who decides to marry him off to a scheming seductress. Wrenched from the embrace of his ingenuous sweetheart, who knows nothing of the sniggers and feelings of repulsion his face triggers in other people, he is taken by force to the court. He soon tries to escape.

Well served by a lyrical score with dark expressionist overtones — the work of Gabriel Thibaudeau, who himself conducted the Octuor de France in front of the screen — Leni's film received an enthusiastic reception from the Cannes audience.

This unexpected presentation of a little-known masterpiece will surely rehabilitate its director. Leni, who belonged to the art movement Der Sturm in the 1910s, worked as a set designer for some of the great names of the German expressionist cinema before turning to film direction himself. His style is marked by wildly daring sets and febrile camera movements.

Carl Laemmle was fascinated by Leni's Waxworks (1924) and invited him to Hollywood to work for Universal. He made four films in the United States, including The Man Who Laughs, which is distinctly more stylish than the studio's run-of-the-mill films in the horror/suspense genre.

Leni displays an impressive visual talent, recalling Bruegel in the village scenes and Goya in his tableaux of the royal family. From time to time he inserts some wonderfully droll images.

It may reasonably be supposed that had he not died in 1929, at the age of 44, Leni would have rivalled F W Murnau (the intensity of the parallel he draws between a man at bay and a dog's gaping mouth is reminiscent of certain shots of Murnau's Sunrise) and indeed Fritz Lang (who may have been thinking of Leni's images of the gallows when he shot Moonfleet).

When Tod Browning made Freaks, he must have had in mind the scene in The Man Who Laughs where the debauched Josiane tries to bewitch the monster with the fake mouth — he used the same actress, Olga Baklanova, who gives a daring performance opposite the extraordinary Conrad Veidt, the very embodiment of suffering as he slashes the bottom half of his face and reveals the horrors beneath in a scene that is visually reminiscent of Edvard Munch's painting, The Scream.

A mere eight copies of The Man Who Laughs have survived. Only two of them (one in Milan, the other in London) contain all the original footage of the film, complete with intertitles. Shot in 1927, the film was released the following year in two versions, one silent, the other with sound (including, believe it or not, songs).

The printing of the restored copy was done by a Bologna laboratory, currently the best in Europe. The whole enterprise, which will enable audiences to rediscover Leni's work, is an example of a new form of partnership that runs against the usual tendency of national cultural structures to keep themselves to themselves: three European film archives joined forces to rescue The Man Who Laughs, a work of art that forms part of our universal world heritage.

(May 16)

Bergman back from the sea

Bruno Peltier in Stockholm

ON MAY 9, during the first press conference he has given in his own country for six years, the Swedish film and theatre director Ingmar Bergman, seemed joky, and relaxed. "I would like to say to those who worry about the subject of my productions that my father, mother, uncles and aunts will not be appearing in the film," he said.

He had momentarily quit his island retreat in the Baltic to announce that he is working on a screenplay. It is clearly a project close to his heart.

Bergman, who will be 80 on July 14, has not embarked on the project alone. He has called on the help of two women. They walked arm in arm with him into the sunny courtyard of the Swedish state television channel, which will produce the film.

He was flanked on his right by the Norwegian Liv Ullmann, one of his favourite actresses, to whom he was married in the sixties. She will direct the two-hour film. On his left was the actress who will star in the movie, Lena Endre. Although little known outside Sweden, she has appeared in several Bergman films.

A balding and rather pale Bergman, wearing a brown suit and an open-necked mauve and wine-coloured shirt, started the ball rolling: "Dear friends, for a long period in my career I toyed with the idea of making a film consisting of a single close-up, that of an actor or actress speaking straight to the audience for two hours.

"We should never forget that the really remarkable thing about film-making is its ability to capture the living image, in close-up, of the human face as it moves."

The film never happened. Then, two years ago, Bergman began to dwell on what he described as his "fantastic co-operation" with Endre on a play by Botho Strauss.

"I said to myself that if Lena told the story, while at the same time acting in several scenes, the result could be fascinating. Then it suddenly seemed as if Lena were visiting me in my workroom. I could visualise the way she prepares herself, expresses herself, her face, her tone of voice, her punctuation and her mood. Everything immediately became crystal clear."

Bergman concluded his tribute by saying: "I'm fascinated by the way her face lives. If Lena hadn't been interested in the project, I wouldn't have gone ahead with it."

What story Bergman wants to tell through the intermediary of his muse remains a mystery. All he would say was that Marianne (Endre's character) would describe, in close-up, an "emotional drama" — a drama he witnessed "fairly close to" in real life and whose nature he is at liberty to reveal now the principal characters are dead.

"It's almost a thriller," Ullmann said. "It is about loneliness and a disturbing silence between people who don't understand each other," as witnessed by a nine-year-old girl. These are typical Bergman themes.

The working title is Trolösa (Faithless). Shooting in Stockholm will not start until the autumn of 1999. The film will be released the following year.

(May 13)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

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U.S. Schools Struggle Against Violence

Rene Sanchez

THEY are all schools in quiet towns where violence is rare, the last places where anyone expects students to explode into a rage, show up with guns and fire ruthlessly at every classmate and teacher in sight.

But what was once unthinkable in the classrooms of Paducah, Kentucky, or Jonesboro, Arkansas, and now Springfield, Oregon, is fast becoming a baffling, tragic new crisis in education.

It already had been a deadly year in the nation's schools when a disgruntled student brought a rifle into the cafeteria at Thurston High School in Oregon last week and fired indiscriminately into a crowd, killing two and wounding 22 others.

Only two months ago, four students and a teacher were killed by gunfire when two boys ambushed a schoolyard in Jonesboro. Three students were killed and five were injured in Paducah last year when a student shot them as they left a prayer meeting. Just last month in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, a student gunned down a teacher and wounded two classmates, and earlier this year in Fairfax County a student was shot dead in a school parking lot.

The growing list of rampages has many educators grasping for new solutions to end the bloodshed — or wondering if there are any. "It is very difficult to prevent things like this," said Anne Bryant, the executive director of the National School Boards Association. "It's not enough just to say we should surround schools with guards and fences. Our entire society has to do more."

In high-crime urban areas, many schools are resorting to metal detectors or armed guards. But the crackdown is also spreading to suburban and rural areas — even at some elementary schools. Many are expelling students, or suspending them for if they are caught even once with a gun, knife, or anything else that could be considered a weapon.

A new report by the Education Department shows that nearly 6,100 students nationwide were expelled from schools last year for that offense. Kipland Kinkel, the 15-year-old who has been arrested over the high school shooting in Oregon, had been expelled just a day earlier for bringing a gun to class.

To calm angry students, schools are also hiring staff trained in conflict resolution or organizing teams of students to help counsel classmates. Some states are removing chronic troublemakers from class and forcing them to attend new alternative schools created just for children or teenagers who have severe behavioral problems.

But there is growing debate among educators about whether the campaigns are working. Some say that teachers are still not taking student threats of violence as seriously as they should. In nearly all the recent shootings the students responsible had dropped obvious hints of their actions. Other critics say most schools are still not taking the kind of steps that could matter most when dealing with troubled students.

"If all schools do is add guards, or metal detectors, or put students in uniforms, or expel them, it won't work," said Ken Dwyer, the assistant director of the National Association of School Psychologists. "You don't change a kid's behavior by expelling him. The real solution is to teach these students how to think, how to act, how to deal with their anger. Maybe that wasn't the job of a school in 1950, but it is now."

Another problem is that many educators think their schools are safe, even as the tally of shootings nationwide mounts.

Nearly three dozen students or teachers have been killed in violent incidents in the past year at schools, and the number of multiple killings at school sites is rising. But there are more than 50 million students and more than 80,000 schools across the country. The vast majority of them never face the kind of profound shock and grief unfolding now at the high school in Oregon, or two months ago at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro.

What remains unanswered is why more students, some barely even teenagers, are resorting to such deadly violence.

Many schools have struggled for more than decade to stop sudden gunfights between gangs, or between students feuding over girls, jackets and trendy basketball sneakers. What's distinct about the recent rash of shootings is that the students at the center of them carefully planned the attacks, then fired on their classmates randomly.

Some educators are also bracing themselves for copycat attacks. Last week, police in St. Charles, Missouri, arrested three sixth-grade boys who had written a "hit list" and were plotting to pull a fire alarm and shoot at classmates on the last day of school.

"The great risk here is that the more kids see other kids doing these things, the more they'll think it gives them permission to act out the same fantasies," said Dwyer, "Unless schools deal with that, I doubt we've seen the last of this."

The mother of a student injured in the Oregon shooting last week shows the strain

Right Wins Elections In Hungary

Christine Spolar in Budapest

THE Socialist-led government of Prime Minister Gyula Horn fell from power this week as voters rallied behind conservative opposition parties in the second round of national elections in Hungary last Sunday.

Horn's party, which had dominated parliament and eked out a first-place showing in balloting two weeks previously, was placed second behind the Hungarian Civic Party, a mainstream right-wing organization spawned by the pre-1989 student dissident movement.

With virtually all the votes counted, the Civic Party appears to have won 148 of 386 seats in parliament, while the Socialists took an estimated 134 seats. A populist, more hard-line right-wing party, the Smallholders, won an estimated 48 seats, while an extreme right-wing party, the Hungarian Party for Justice and Life, will enter parliament for the first time with 14 seats. The Hungarian Democratic Forum, a conservative party that won the first democratic elections here in 1990, captured about 17 seats.

The Socialists' junior coalition partner, the Alliance of Free Democrats, was the biggest loser in the vote, winning just 24 seats, compared with 69 in 1994 elections.

Civic Party leader Viktor Orban, a onetime student dissident now slated to become the the next prime minister of this eight-year-old democracy, spent much of the past decade verbally jabbing at Hungary's old Communist rulers and then their Socialist heirs. His challenge will be to find a consensus among a strong-willed and feisty pack of conservative groups. Horn offered no hints to his future after the election result became clear; instead, the 66-year-old career politician said his party had made a "respectable" showing, "considering that all our enemies joined forces against us."

He said the new government should "make the stability of the country" its priority and "preserve the achievements of the past four years." He cited NATO expansion — Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland have been invited to join the Western military alliance — and Hungary's economic reform program as part of this government's legacy.

In the final days of the race, polls showed the Socialists to be losing ground to voter anxiety about crime and corruption, and this issue seems to have boosted turnout. The first round of voting on May 10 drew the lowest percentage of voters — 56 percent — in any national election since the 1989 collapse of Communist rule. Last Sunday, 57 percent of all voters participated, the highest percentage for a second-round parliamentary election here.

Israeli Interrogators Under Spotlight

William Drozdiak in Jerusalem

IN AN unprecedented challenge to Israel's security forces, the Supreme Court opened hearings last week in a major legal case contesting the use of violent interrogation methods that human rights groups and Palestinian prisoners claim are tantamount to torture.

The appeal, which was brought by four former prisoners and two leading human rights organizations, implored Israel's highest judicial authority to impose a strict ban on all forms of physical abuse that may violate international conventions on torture which were signed by Israel and many other democratic governments.

The Israeli government insists that employing "modest physical pressure" to extract information from hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held without charges has been invaluable in uncovering terrorist plots and preventing the loss of civilian lives.

A deposition filed by Ami Ayalon, head of the nation's General Security Service, contended that dozens of planned bombings and kidnappings by Palestinian terror cells were thwarted within the past year because of names, details or confessions gleaned from prisoners through "special and unusual methods" employed by Israeli interrogators.

According to testimony by several Palestinian prisoners, those methods include violent shaking of detained suspects, binding and gagging them in painful positions, forcing them to wear hoods soaked in vomit or urine, depriving them of sleep and subjecting them to blasts of cold air and loud music.

The landmark case is being closely watched to see what kind of legal limits the Israeli judicial system may decide to impose on the country's security forces, whose once-vaunted reputation has been tarnished by torture charges at home and botched espionage missions by Israeli agents abroad. These include a failed assassination attempt in Jordan against an Islamic resistance leader and the arrest in Switzerland of a Mossad spy caught in the act of installing eavesdropping equipment.

While some temporary injunctions have been issued in the past, the high court has never been asked to issue a blanket ruling on the legality of using force against persons detained.

The nine justices on the panel made it clear that they were dismayed about being asked to rule on a key legal precedent in the absence of any legislative guidelines for police interrogations. "Why should the Supreme Court pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the parliament?" complained Chief Justice Aharon Barak. But the court consented to take the case and promised to reach a decision as quickly as possible.

Lee Hockstader in Jerusalem adds: A high-powered U.S. congressional delegation visiting Israel this week is giving the lie to the maxim that when it comes to American foreign policy, political debates end at the shoreline.

The bipartisan eight-member delegation, led by House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia, and Democratic Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, D-Missouri, spent its first full day in Jerusalem assuring everyone concerned that when it comes to making peace in the Middle East, Congress is on Israel's side, come what may.

That message is at odds with the Clinton administration's strategy in recent weeks to intensify the pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom it regards as both intransigent and unwilling to compromise with Palestinians regarding the stalled U.S.-brokered peace process.

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'Suharto, Inc.' Comes Under Scrutiny

Keith B. Richburg in Jakarta

AS EX-PRESIDENT Suharto last week began the life of, as he put it, "a simple citizen," Indonesians faced a new and potentially wrenching question: what to do about the billions of dollars in wealth amassed over three decades by Suharto, his children and his cronies?

A large part of Suharto's mixed legacy to his country is a massive, far-flung business empire, sometimes referred to as "Suharto, Inc.," controlled by his six children, a half-brother, and a host of other relatives, friends, associates and assorted hangers-on.

The Suharto children are all reputed to have become multimillionaires by trading on their direct line to the presidential palace, involved in everything from clove cigarettes to toll roads, from petrochemical plants to automobile manufacturing. So pervasive is the first family's reach into the Indonesian economy that a long-running joke here is that the corruption begins as soon as you arrive in Jakarta's international airport: You can buy a pack of cigarettes, hop in a taxi, take the toll road to the city and check into a hotel, putting money into a Suharto family member's pocket with each step.

Several family members head their own business conglomerates. Son Bambang is at the top of the Bimantara group, which produces the Cakra automobile, owns newspapers and broadcast outlets and is involved in petrochemicals, a gas pipeline, and the major stake in the Grand Hyatt Hotel.

A younger son, Hutomo Mandala Putra, or "Tommy," runs the Humpuss group, with involvement in communications, the clove monopoly, and a competitor local car, the Timor. Daughter Siti Harjanti Rukmana has the Citra Lantoro Gung group, which has built toll roads and other facilities, and is involved in power stations and transportation projects.

And the children aren't the only ones. Suharto's half-brother Sudwikatmono is into banking, monopolizes movies here through his control of the import of films and all the theater chains, and has a variety of restaurants, supermarkets and hotels. Even a Suharto grandson, Ari Sigit, is getting into the act, with retail outlets, a share in a water distribution company in Jakarta, a share of tax collection on alcohol sales, and the lucrative monopoly for the export of birds' nests, which are used in Chinese food dishes around the region.

The blatant use of the family connection to win a commanding slice of the national economy has made the Suharto relatives the object of widespread hatred — more so, it seems, than Suharto himself. During the violent outbreak in the capital on May 14, rioters targeted the most recognizable symbols of the first family's wealth, including offices of Bambang's Bimantara company and Tommy Suharto's Timor showrooms.

Suharto himself has always lived modestly, largely shunning Indonesia's official presidential palace, Merdeka, and remaining at his comfortable house in the Cendana district. He has never been known to dress in fancy clothes or wear expensive jewelry. Still, he is reported to be one of the world's wealthiest individuals, with Forbes magazine calculating that he is the sixth-wealthiest person in the world, with a net worth of $16 billion. The Suharto family was listed as worth a total of $30 billion.

Much of Suharto's own wealth is generated through an extensive network of charitable foundations he heads. Money raised by the charities has been used to support the political operations of the ruling Golkar party. Critics have called for investigations into whether Suharto has transferred his wealth to secret bank accounts in Europe.

For the young protesters whose bold "people power" movement toppled Suharto's carefully constructed New Order regime, seizing at least some of the first family's wealth and returning it to the nation's cash-strapped treasury is now the unfinished part of their revolution.

"I don't agree with this [resignation]," said Benny, 19, a technical school student from Trisakti University. "His children are still the heads of businesses. They must be charged, brought to court."

Arief Nurbani, 25, an economics student, noted that "first and foremost, the wealth must be nationalized. That wealth belongs to the people."

In the minutes after Suharto announced his resignation, the commander of the powerful armed forces delivered his own terse message: "The military will protect Suharto and his family." But with Suharto now out of power, many here say that whatever impunity his children enjoyed may have evaporated.

"If I were the kids, I'd be gone," said a Western diplomat and longtime Indonesia-watcher, speaking anonymously.

In Indonesia, retrieving the wealth of the Suharto children may prove difficult. One problem here is that much of the Suharto children's money is invested in companies that are publicly listed on the Jakarta Stock Exchange. "Do you destroy these companies just to get at the kids?" a diplomat asked. "And what about the rest of the shareholders?"

Some financial analysts said that even if a future Indonesian government decided to seize the children's assets in publicly listed companies, minority shareholders likely would be unaffected. One view is that if left alone, the Suharto children will fall victim to market forces. And even after the crisis eases, they will have lost their connection to the presidential palace, and thus their ability to make new money.



President Suharto salutes after his resignation announcement on live national television last week PHOTOGRAPH: CHARLES DHARAPAK

U.S. Forces Train Colombian Troops

Dana Priest and Douglas Farah

U.S. SPECIAL Forces troops have been conducting extensive training exercises with Colombian soldiers fighting drug traffickers and guerrillas under a program that avoids restrictions imposed on military aid by the Clinton administration in response to Colombia's abysmal human rights record and drug-related corruption.

The training, involving hundreds of U.S. troops each year, has allowed the U.S. military to play a much more direct and autonomous role in Colombia than officials have publicly acknowledged. Small teams of elite American troops have instructed Colombians in light infantry tactics and intelligence gathering for anti-drug operations, and have conducted counterterrorism courses, usually in remote jungle bases where guerrillas and drug traffickers are most active.

The program is authorized under a 1991 law that permits U.S. Special Forces, America's premier irregular fighters, to train on foreign soil if the training is designed primarily to benefit the U.S. troops. While not secret, the training is sensitive enough that few in Congress are aware of it and the exercises have been suspended this month as Colombia holds presidential elections.

The law authorizing the Special Forces exercises does not require U.S. troops to abide by a State Department policy in which military aid is restricted to Colombian units that have been cleared of any involvement in human rights abuses. Colombian troops trained by the Special Forces are not similarly vetted.

It was under the same program, known as JCET for Joint Combined Exchange Training, that U.S. troops conducted 41 training exercises with Indonesia in the past seven years even though many members of Congress believed they had curtailed military ties with that country because of human rights abuses. Defense Secretary William S. Cohen suspended the Indonesia program this month.

"We consider JCET an important program because it allows us to train in different areas of the world and to learn how other militaries operate," Pentagon spokesman Kenneth H. Bacon said.

The training program has quietly proceeded in Colombia as a civil war there has intensified and Washington debates how to oppose drug trafficking from the world's top cocaine producer, where all centers of power — the military, the government and the guerrillas — have been tainted by the drug trade. While the United States is reluctant to get involved in counterinsurgency operations, the line between the narco-traffickers and the guerrillas has blurred.

Senior administration officials said an across-the-board assessment of Colombian policy is underway, involving the State Department, Defense Department and intelligence agencies, because of a consensus that Colombia, the hemisphere's second-oldest democracy, is facing an escalating threat to its stability.

In recent months, the two Marxist guerrilla movements have inflicted heavy losses on government troops and now control about 50 percent of the country. A recent Defense Intelligence Agency report estimated the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has 15,000 troops and the National Liberation Army (ELN) has 5,000 troops, a substantial increase from a year earlier.

U.S. Special Forces officers involved in the training program in Colombia say it plays an essential role in maintaining good relations with a longstanding U.S. ally. They also say U.S. troops learn to operate in jungle and mountain terrain not found in the United States and train for emergency evacuations of U.S. personnel and for fighting terrorism.

But the uneasy, broader U.S. relationship with Colombian authorities was highlighted this month when the United States revoked the visa of Gen. Ivan Ramirez, the inspector general of the armed forces, over his alleged ties to several army massacres of civilians. Two years ago the United States barred contacts with Gen. Hernando Camilo Zuniga, then commander of the armed forces, because of suspected ties to drug traffickers.

Under heavy U.S. pressure, President Ernesto Samper disbanded the 20th Intelligence Brigade last week because of evidence it was responsible for a series of murders of politicians and human rights activists.

The Special Forces training program has survived the vicissitudes of U.S.-Colombian relations, including President Clinton's "decertification" of the country for its poor anti-narcotics efforts in 1996 and 1997, which triggered a ban on military equipment transfers and all U.S. military training except by the Special Forces.

In Brief

FOR THE first time, a senior Saudi security official last week publicly absolved Iran of involvement in the June 1996 bombing of a U.S. military housing complex that killed 19 American service personnel, blaming the attack on homegrown Saudi dissidents.

Prince Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz, the Saudi interior minister, told a Kuwaiti newspaper that the bombing "took place at Saudi hands," adding "No foreign party had any role in it."

Nayef's statement contradicts long-standing suspicions in Washington that the attack was carried out by Shiite Muslim extremists with support from Iran's radical Islamic government.

A FEDERAL judge ordered Secret Service officers last week to reveal what they know about President Clinton's relationship with Monica S. Lewinsky, dismissing dire warnings that such testimony would jeopardize the safety of presidents by destroying their trust in the agents who guard them.

Chief U.S. District Judge Norma Holloway Johnson, who has sided with independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr in several recent decisions, ruled that Secret Service personnel are obligated as law enforcement officers to turn over evidence in a criminal probe and refused to create a special "protective function privilege" that would exempt them.

Clinton said the decision would have serious ramifications and chided Starr for being "so insensitive" to safety considerations by seeking the testimony.

MICROSOFT Corp. will be allowed to sell an unaltered version of its controversial Windows 98 software for at least the next four months, but the company will face a trial much sooner than it had wanted on government charges that it is violating antitrust laws, a federal judge ruled last week.

Microsoft had asked U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson to give it seven months to prepare for a preliminary hearing into two broad antitrust lawsuits filed by the Justice Department and a coalition of 20 state attorneys general. The company then wanted many more months to prepare for a full trial.

Handing a key procedural victory to the government, Jackson decided instead to consolidate both the preliminary hearing and the full trial, scheduling the proceedings to begin in early September.

SIX MEN have died after using Viagra since the popular impotence drug hit the market, federal regulators and the drug's manufacturer said last week.

The causes of the deaths are still under investigation, and the drug's maker, Pfizer Inc., declined to elaborate. While the deaths could prove to be unrelated to the drug, the new reports raised concerns that Viagra could be interacting with other medications, or is allowing men with pre-existing heart conditions to overexert themselves through sexual activity and bring on heart attacks.

Since the Food and Drug Administration approved Viagra in April more than 900,000 users have gotten prescriptions, according to market research firm IMS America Ltd — making Viagra the biggest new drug launch in recent years.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY May 31 1998

Some call burning flesh a 'rite of passage.' Others say it's an ugly throwback to slavery. But it's a hot fashion statement, writes **Lonnae O'Neal Parker**

Brand Loyalty

IMAGINE a carefully fashioned coat hanger, slow-roasted over the blue-green flame of a Magic Chef range, heading for the fleshy expanse of your upper arm, your chest or the side of your behind.

For a fraction of a second, you can feel the heat before it touches your skin. Your heart races and instinctively you want to draw back. But you don't. Because you want your brand to be sweet. Or if you think you'll move, you brace yourself, holding onto a sink or table; or perhaps you get somebody else to hold you down.

Then comes the "hit," a quick "Psssssst." Or maybe it's a "crackle" or "pop". They say it doesn't really hurt. But the smell of burning flesh can be weird. Especially when it's yours.

Many people watching this year's NCAA Final Four tournament caught sight of the big horseshoe-shaped scar on the arm of University of North Carolina's Shammond Williams. Michael Jordan's brand, hidden on his chest, is more discreet. Dallas Cowboy's Emmitt Smith sported a brand on his arm for a 1993 cover of Sports Illustrated. Other folks have Greek letters melted into their calves or seared into their forearms.

Although doctors warn there can be complications — infection, excessive scarring, designs gone wrong — around the country lots of people get branded. For some black Greek fraternity members (and fewer white ones) it's a long-standing tradition, but experts say it's also become something of a fad.

Gang members brand themselves to claim their set, while for others, brands are an extension of green Mohawks and multiple nose rings. Branding can forge a connection.

As Myyucca Sherman strolls across the Howard University campus, his baby dreadlocks standing at attention, he stops occasionally to slap hands with a buddy or trade barks with another "Que dog" who spots his bright purple sweat shirt emblazoned with gold Greek letters.

Sherman, 19, has been a "Que," a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, since spring of last year, and he's got three brands — double, interlocking Omegas on his chest, and a large Omega with a small Greek A inside, for Alpha chapter, in the middle of his left arm. Of his initiation class of nine men, all chose to get branded.

It was the second time an organization had made a permanent impression on him.

Sherman is reluctant to show the three-inch, five-point star that rides high on his left hip. He got that one at 13 to mark his membership in the Black Gangster Disciple Nation, a gang in his Akron, Ohio, home town. "The way our sect ran, you could get prayed in or beat in. I got beat in. Then there's celebrating with drink and I was branded the day after with thick paper clips."

Sherman credits the pre-college program Upward Bound and rites of passage activities in high school with turning him from his gangster ways. He entered the University of Akron at 16 and transferred to Howard a year later.

After joining the fraternity at Howard, he says, "initially, I wasn't going to get a brand, but I thought about it and equated the whole fraternity life as another rite of passage. This was more ritualistic and traditional than the juvenile self-mutilation. This brand wouldn't be like it was in a gang. It had deeper meaning, more history."

In the last 10 years, branding has become a typical form of gang "tagging," says Michael Borrero, a professor and director of the Institute for Violence Reduction at the University of Connecticut who has worked in gang outreach for more than 30 years. "It's a ritual to say we are brothers, we are sisters, you are officially part of us," Borrero says.

Michael Lyles, 35, a Washington child welfare attorney who also heads his own Maryland law practice, has studied the historical origins of fraternity branding and its relation to African scarification practices and says burning carries a symbolism that crosses many cultures.

"Historically, branding probably came in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s," says Lyles, an Omega since he was 17 who has brands on his right biceps and over his heart. "It took on a kind of widespread usage — mainly among the Omegas first, then the Kappas [Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity] and Alphas [Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity] began to do it also. One of the things that I guess solidified branding as something to do is the things that our fraternity is based on — manhood, scholarship, etc. It seemed to signify the 'till the day I die-ness' of it all, because supposedly you can't remove it."



Myyucca Sherman, right, shows off his Omega Psi Psi brand along with a Howard University fraternity brother PHOTO: ROBERT A. REEDER

In one scene from the 1988 Spike Lee movie School Daze, a girl is shown licking a brand on the chest of a brother from the fictitious Gamma Phi Gamma fraternity. Duane Filey, 27, a fourth-grade teacher at James McHenry Elementary School in Lanham and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, acknowledges wryly that, for some reason, women seem to find his scar compelling. Still, Filey, who has a diamond with a K inside branded on the left side of his chest, now says he regrets having it done.

"I was young and thought it was a cool thing to do," Filey says. "I was like 'I'm in Florida, I can have my shirt off and the babes will look at it.' Women are into that. The brand, the frat . . . it was a conversation piece, they wanted to touch it."

He now calls the practice barbaric. "As I got older, I started thinking about slavery and that sort of thing. I can't even find the words to describe how ill it was to get a brand to identify you as a slave. This clearly isn't for that purpose, but now I think people have just gotten out of control. It's a big fad right now."

When Suitland High School math teacher and basketball coach Eric Jeter, 31, first came home with his Phi Beta Sigma brands — he has three — he says, "my parents were like, 'Do you think you're a piece of meat or something?' They said, 'We fought so hard to get away from slavery and branding and you go ahead and brand yourself.'"

JETER says he understood their concern, but disagreed. He calls it a personal choice. "It's not slavery. It's basically something you want done. It's more of a pride thing. You want people to know which fraternity you belong to without asking. When they see the brand, they know."

Just down the hall, Suitland's vice principal, Mark Fossett, 30, who has Kappa brands on his chest and arm, says, "The first question everybody always asks is, 'Did it hurt?' When I first got branded, it didn't really hurt. But when it was healing, then it hurt. The actual brand was a quick 'psssssst.' It was like an instant of pain."

Fossett got branded in a hotel during the annual summer Greek picnic in Philadelphia. "This was a Kappa brother who was hitting other brothers.There were about 10 to 15 of us. He hit me on my arm — straight from the fire to my arm — then he heated the brand back up and hit the next guy behind me. Then he went from his arm to my chest. The iron couldn't be as hot, it's not like you have all that meat there so you don't want it to be too deep."

"When the skin is branded, the skin is actually burned. The degree of the burn depends on how hot the brand is," says Rebat Halder, a professor and chairman of Howard's Department of Dermatology. "If the burn is deep enough, then the normal skin comes off, and it is replaced by scar tissue. If it's a first- or second-degree burn, skin doesn't come off but you can have a blister develop in the area of a brand."

Of course there can be nasty complications. They include, Halder says, infection, pain, hyper- or hypo-pigmentation, where the skin actually changes color, and itchy or hypersensitive keloids, raised scar tissue that spreads beyond the actual boundaries of the original injury.

Halder, who has been at Howard since 1982, says he's treated upward of 300 people with brands, mostly men who got fraternity brands in college, but at least 50 to 75 women, some former gang members and others. He says a number of his patients inquire about brand removal which can be done surgically.

Kirk Blackman, 30, a senior manager with the KPMG accounting and consulting firm in Washington, says that even though he works in a highly professional setting, he's never regretted getting the Que branded on his left arm.

When folks who are unfamiliar with branding see it, he says, they are often overwhelmed by a certain tactile urge. They gotta touch it. They want to know why. "Why would someone subject themselves to what they perceive to be very painful?" he's asked. "You explain it to them and they say, 'Oh, okay.' It's kind of like a 'Man, that's really deep' kind of response. I don't know if they ever really grasp it fully, or if they're afraid to ask more questions."

Probably a good thing, since Blackman isn't sure he has all the answers anyway.

Consumers Make Them Just Do It

COMMENT
E.J. Dionne Jr.

CONSUMERS and workers of the world unite — Just do it! If you do, you can affect the behavior of manufacturing giants such as Nike, for whom image is everything.

Nike Inc.'s announcement this month that it would raise the minimum age for its workers and impose American air quality standards on its plants overseas marks a breakthrough for American and international human rights campaigners who have argued that basic liberties shouldn't stop at the factory door. It turns out that public shaming and consumer pressure can have a mighty impact on mighty manufacturers.

Philip H. Knight, Nike's chairman and chief executive, was remarkably candid during a speech at the National Press Club in acknowledging how much damage the critics had done to his company's image.

"It has been said that Nike has single-handedly lowered the human rights standards for the sole purpose of maximizing profits," he said. "The Nike product has become synonymous with slave wages, forced overtime and arbitrary abuse. I truly believe that the American consumer does not want to buy products made in abusive conditions." Go for it, Phil.

The new commitments, Knight said — speaking at a moment when his company is flooding the airwaves with advertising around the National Basketball Association playoffs — reflect "who we are as a company."

There remains the small problem of living wages. "Sweatshops are known to the U.S. public as places where people work in miserable conditions for miserable wages," Medea Benjamin, director of Global Exchange, said in an interview. "Nike is addressing the miserable conditions, but a sweatshop is a sweatshop is a sweatshop unless you address miserable wages."

But Benjamin, whose San Francisco-based group has helped put labor rights on the human rights agenda, said the Nike moves were nonetheless significant. It's important, she said, that the company is accepting the principle that outside monitors should oversee its labor practices, and that it is agreeing to abide overseas by the environmental and safety standards set in American law. "If you can get Nike with enough pressure, you can get the whole industry," she said.

The Nike moves are a small step on a very long journey whose aim is to civilize the global economy. Around the world, unions and human rights groups have argued that a global trading system should be subject to labor and environmental rules, much as domestic economies are. Investors who favor global agreements to protect their financial assets ought to see the logic of similar rules to protect human assets — the people who work in the plants.

But enforceable global labor standards will not come easily. In the meantime, there is something called the marketplace and it gives consumers the right to make judgments: Yes, about the quality of the products they buy, but also about the behavior of the companies that make them. It might surprise Karl Marx that consumer decisions based on a company's human rights record can affect sales and, in turn, Wall Street's judgments.

"A stain on one of the sterling brands of the century is reflecting itself in its stock price," says Ronald Blackwell, director of corporate affairs for the AFL-CIO, referring to Nike. The company had a 27 percent drop in earnings in the first three quarters of the current fiscal year, though Knight attributed this to the Asian financial crisis.

Blackwell argues that the next step is to recognize that ending the most egregious abuses in foreign factories is not enough. Reforms will endure, he said, only if workers have the right to speak up on their own behalf without fear of reprisal, physical violence or jail terms. He notes that Nike has factories in Vietnam, China and Indonesia, "three of the most difficult countries in the world for ensuring workers' rights."

Echoing the Polish union leaders who helped bring down communism, Blackwell said "totalitarian governments" that block "freedom of association and freedom of expression" for workers can render even the nicest sounding corporate codes of conduct unenforceable.

Perhaps the corporate execs could have a word or two with the leaders of the police states where they locate their factories and gently suggest that human rights violations are becoming bad for business. And perhaps those who are rightly battling for religious liberty in such nations can link arms with those who want freedom's writ to run to those who make our Air Jordans.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Art Before Love

Jonathan Yardley

ELLEN GLASGOW
A Biography
By Susan Goodman
Johns Hopkins. 308 pp. $34.95

BORN in Virginia in 1873, Ellen Glasgow lived almost her entire life in her native state and had become, by her death in 1945, its most accomplished and respected writer of fiction. She seems to have been a strange woman, though no stranger perhaps than most whose lives are spent in uneasy passage between the "real" and the make-believe. She believed, according to Susan Goodman, that "art — even the transitory song of a nightingale — has more permanence than death and provides more comfort than love," and she lived accordingly.

The body of her fiction is large and varied. It runs to about two dozen volumes published during her lifetime, as well as several posthumous ones, and ranges from realism to the novel of manners to satire to romance. In her day she was popular, albeit not hugely so, and was able to support herself on her writing, a rare thing for a serious writer in the United States; she was, as well as a writer of distinction, a canny student of publishing practices who knew how to make her publishers pay handsomely.

But she is not now well-known. A number of her books are still in print and she has her admirers in the academic dissertation factory, but there is little reason to believe she has many readers beyond the Virginia state line and, in all likelihood, not many within it. This is both a pity and a mystery: a pity because, as Goodman correctly argues, her work ranks alongside that of her "chief rivals," Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, and a mystery because it is accessible, intelligent and immensely interesting.

Glasgow came from a well-placed but rather unhappy Virginia family. Her mother was a "chronic invalid" by the time Ellen was 10, and her relationship with her father was uneasy. Death and illness haunted her family, and there were other causes of unhappiness as well, including a deafness that descended upon her when she was in her early twenties, producing "episodic panic attacks . . . that circumscribed her movement and increased her dependency." She learned to cope with the world — she traveled, gave speeches, had many friends — but this condition may have had something to do with her failure to marry, though she had ample opportunity to do so.

Her work drew directly from her life, yet it was hardly "autobiographical" as the term is now understood. One can read it as a way of discovering what she called, in her splendid memoir, the "woman within," but it is not self-regarding or self-obsessed. In her own family, "whose story during and after the Civil War seemed as compelling as any fiction," she had the raw material for a large, durable and interconnected body of work that is comparable, in that sense of wholeness as well as in its preoccupation with the South, with the work of her contemporary William Faulkner, with whom she was friendly in a guarded way.

Although she wrote in many forms, it is fair to say that the novel of manners lies at the root of almost all her books. "When novels of manners are 'great'," Goodman writes, "they do not record superficial behavior, but examine the codes that govern people's lives." This has always been so, yet it is a truth that too many critics fail to grasp, confusing as they do the writer's eye for detail with mere superficiality. Glasgow lived in the great age of the American novel of manners; she and Wharton brought the genre to new heights in the first decades of the century, then handed it over to the likes of John P. Marquand and Louis Auchincloss as their own powers began to wane.

Glasgow's great novel Barren Ground appeared in 1925. By then she had done much apprentice work as well as much of considerably higher accomplishment, and she had reached what Goodman calls "a liberating creed of fiction, one that honored the world within over the one without," which is to say a creed that paralleled the life she herself lived. In that novel and her other masterpiece, The Sheltered Life, Glasgow combined social commentary with psychological insight, and further enriched the mix with a trenchant examination of the lives of women. She admired independent, strong women at a time when what we now know as feminism was barely in its infancy, and her books — utterly free of the doctrinaire or the ideological — can be read today with pleasure and edification.

Glasgow was a feminist ahead of her time, but she liked men and was liked by them in return. Her first important influence was a brother-in-law, George McCormack, whose early death was devastating to her. At least two men loved her: One, known from her memoir only as Gerald B, also died too early, while her romance with and brief engagement to a prominent Richmonder, Henry Anderson, had some elements of drama and some of farce. She was deeply fond of James Branch Cabell, another Richmond novelist popular in their day but now even more forgotten than she, and she had a charming — not to mention unlikely — friendship with H.L. Mencken.

Glasgow was a feminist ahead of her time but liked men and was liked by them

Susan Goodman tells Glasgow's story in a straightforward way, succumbing from time to time to the temptations of current academic language ("empowering," "validation") as well as to those of amateur psychiatry. Like most people who choose to write the life stories of writers, she is stuck with the inescapable limitation of not having much of a story to tell. Apart from her travels and her romances and her literary socializing, Glasgow spent her life at her writing desk. One can speculate about what and why she did what she did there on the evidence of the work that emerged from it, and this Goodman does with intelligence. But in the end we are left, as we always are with imaginative and creative writers, with the endlessly fascinating and ultimately unanswerable question: Where did the work come from, and how, and why?

ILLUSTRATION ANTHONY RUSSO

Man of Nazareth

Michael Dirda

THE HUMAN CHRIST
The Search for the Historical Jesus
By Charlotte Allen
Free Press. 383 pp. $26

IN SHAKESPEARE'S Lives the late Samuel Schoenbaum zestily chronicled the biographical myths, obsessions and fantasies surrounding the upstart crow, and eventual swan, of Avon. At the end of his preface to this learned razing of folly, Schoenbaum noted that the theater critic Desmond MacCarthy once observed that "trying to work out Shakespeare's personality was like looking at a very dark glazed picture in the National Portrait Gallery: at first you see nothing, then you begin to recognize features, and then you realize that they are your own."

Something similar might be said of the attempts by New Testament scholars, learned amateurs and diverse crackpots to paint a portrait of the historical Jesus. Each has found the Galilean he was looking for, whether a reform rabbi, Gnostic sage, political revolutionary, Cynic philosopher, gentle hippie, hysterical madman or gay magician. Some feminist theologians have even reimagined the "historical Jesus on the cross as a woman suffering from menstrual cramps."

In The Human Christ Charlotte Allen, a contributing editor of the magazine Lingua Franca, has had the splendid idea of writing a skeptical, Schoenbaum-like popular history of the quest for "the historical Jesus." By this last phrase Biblical scholars indicate their refusal to address directly the issue of belief in Christ as God's son and mankind's savior. Such transcendent matters, many say, belong ultimately to the realm of faith, not history. Allen herself confesses to being a Catholic, though her survey of these often freaky Jesuses would tempt even a Mother Teresa to agnosticism.

The Human Christ embraces a vast amount of history, ranging from the social conditions of Palestine under Herod to the controversies generated by Robert Funk's Jesus Seminar, that semi-notorious group of contemporary researchers and theologians who aim to separate the Gospel wheat (Jesus's original koan-like sayings) from the New Testament chaff of evangelistic and churchly propaganda.

In these fast-paced and entertaining pages, Allen summarizes the romanticized biographies of Jesus promulgated by scores of 19th-century liberal Protestants. She explains the epochal Life Of Jesus Critically Examined (1835) of David Friedrich Strauss, looks at Albert Schweitzer's long-standard Quest Of The Historical Jesus (1906), and interprets Rudolf Bultmann's existential views and the eventual revolt of his postwar disciples. She discusses too the ancient Nag Hammadi Library and the Gospel Of Thomas (a listing of Jesus sayings, some familiar from the established gospels but most new and rather Gnostic in character). She relates the discovery and vicissitudes of the Dead Sea Scrolls (at one time their owner tried to sell them through an ad in the Wall Street Journal). And she traces the changing responses of Jewish thinkers to Jesus.

But Allen doesn't restrict her studies to Biblical scholarship. James Tissot's gorgeous Victorian illustrations for the New Testament and F. Holland Day's soft-core turn-of-the-century photographs of boy martyrs earn a few provocative pages, as do Cecil B. De Mille's film epics King Of Kings (with its sloe-eyed, passionate Mary Magdalene) and The Sign Of The Cross (with Claudette Colbert as the Empress Poppea bathing in ass's milk). Allen points out the literary influence of Chateaubriand's sado-romantic The Martyrs (delicate virgins ripped apart by lions) and Ernest Renan's lyrical Vie De Jesus — the Messiah as sensitive aesthete. She then examines fictional treatments of the Holy Land and the new faith in Flaubert's Herodias, Wilde's Salome, Lew Wallace's Ben-Hur, and, not least, Henryk Sienkiewicz's Quo Vadis. Of this last, she tells us with nicely timed wit, "To this day the best-selling novel of all time, Quo Vadis is a masterpiece of intricately plotted and thoroughly researched second-rate fiction."

To investigate the historical Jesus, scholars must rely almost entirely on the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Despite appearances, these are not brief lives so much as works of proclamation (*kerygma*) and subtle polemic, campaign biographies if you like. At least since the late Renaissance, rationalist critics of this "good news" have periodically announced the same discovery: The real Jesus has been lost to history, and a fiction established in his place. Usually the (supposedly) fanatical St. Paul or the legalistic and bureaucratic Christian church or the Pharisees have distorted or obscured the Nazarene's simple life and true teachings. Most of the time, this suppressed Jesus seems to have advocated a natural religion of kindness and universal morality, one in deep contrast to the hierarchical, priest-ridden and sin-obsessed church of Christ. When the true Jesus wasn't regarded as a teacher, he was likely to be perceived as a deluded madman who convinced himself he was the Messiah; his disciples were susceptible to hypnotism or mass hysteria. Miracles were performed through hocus-pocus and the sick or blind healed by the aid of some powerful curative salve otherwise unknown to science. The Resurrection either never happened or was a carefully executed trick.

All these and many other fascinating and arcane matters — the lost Q gospel, form criticism, the two-nature hypothesis, the third quest — are touched on in The Human Christ. As a journalist, Allen writes cleanly and simply, though her chapters meander a bit and sometimes leave one hungry for more detail. She also possesses the irritating habit, derived from magazine work, of identifying everything and everybody, e.g. "Martin Luther, a founder of Protestantism." She appears to rely mainly on English-language sources and occasionally gets a nuance wrong: For example, it's Albert (not Alfred) B. Lord. Not least, I would like to have seen greater attention paid to the work of E.P. Sanders, the leading contemporary authority on Paul, and to that of John P. Meier, author of A Marginal Jew, the most comprehensive modern investigation into the historical Jesus.

But this is to ask for more in the midst of plenty. Did you know that Schelling's 1841 lectures on religion were attended by "the young Friedrich Engels, the young Soren Kierkegaard, and the future Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin"? That in the original novel, it is Judah Ben-Hur who cuts the spokes of Massala's chariot wheel, and not the other way around as portrayed in the film. That Mary Ann Evans, better known in later life for the novels she wrote as George Eliot, learned German and spent two years translating Strauss's mammoth Life Of Jesus? That . . . but I'd better stop.

Despite minor shortcomings, The Human Christ: The Search For The Historical Jesus offers superb intellectual entertainment, nearly 400 pages replete with conspiracy theories, academic rivalries, deranged wish-fulfillments and monumental works of scholarship. Once I started, I couldn't stop reading — and that's the gospel truth.

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Brotherly love in a cold climate

Larry Elliott reflects on Labour's Fairness At Work white paper

TIM Melville-Ross is right. The Blair government's Fairness at Work white paper represents a significant shift in the balance of power between capital and labour. According to Mr Melville-Ross, who heads the Institute of Directors, it is bad for business, bad for the economy, bad for Britain.

But he would say that, wouldn't he? The significance of the proposed reforms lies not in the scale of the concessions to the unions — which will still be constrained by the tightest legal strictures of any Western economy — but in the direction of the change.

British employers have got so used to having their own way that it obviously came as a shock to find the Government doing something to make industrial relations more egalitarian. The fact that they were belly-aching like mad suggests that there were aspects of the white paper to be welcomed — as, of course, there are.

The automatic right to union recognition if more than 50 per cent of the workforce are union members, the right to representation in disciplinary procedures, the cut from two years to one in the qualifying period for unfair dismissal, and the scrapping of the ceiling on compensation for unfair dismissal were all progressive moves.

But the idea that Fairness at Work will unleash a tide of resurgent union militancy is fatuous. The emphasis of the white paper is on individual, not collective rights, and on the main point, the threshold for recognition in a workplace ballot, the Government sided with the Confederation of British Industry, not the Trades Union Congress.

To the extent that it leaves people guessing about the Government's intentions, Fairness at Work is a cute document. For those who would like to think this will be the last pro-union legislation a Blair administration enacts, the Prime Minister has been enthusing about the most "lightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world".

For those who believe that the Government favours a salami-slice approach, there was the warning to employers about the abuse of "zero-hour contracts" — in which staff are not paid unless there is work to do — and the promise to review the 40 per cent threshold for recognition.

Clearly, the Government needs convincing that there is a case in a modern economy for stronger unions and more collective bargaining. However, it should not be swayed by the siren calls of Mr Melville-Ross and his director chums: being friendly to organised labour would help tackle job insecurity, carry no real political risks and be good for the economy.

Politically, the case for being beastly to the unions goes like this: Labour has a new, broad constituency, a large chunk of which would scuttle back into the arms of Conservative leader, William Hague, if it looked as if the Government were showering favours on its old trade union mates. Moreover Labour can be as hostile to the unions as it likes, because they have nowhere else to go.

Held up to the light, most of these arguments look pretty threadbare. For a start, one reason voters deserted the Conservatives at the last election was because they wanted a more interventionist approach to unemployment and job insecurity. Labour's coalition is broad but shallow, and as the poll ratings for the Scottish National Party in Scotland prove, support could flake away given a viable, populist alternative.

Furthermore the idea that ministers would actively welcome a strike with a high-profile public-sector union is too barmy for words.

How would a fight with teachers or nurses help Labour convince voters that it was making good its election pledges on class sizes and waiting lists? The answer is that it would have precisely the opposite effect, and almost certainly hasten the flight of the middle classes out of the state sector.

NOR IS there any guarantee of a political pay-off. Public-sector workers are already nursing a legitimate grievance — namely that earnings growth of 2.6 per cent a year in the public sector is running at only half the 5.2 per cent recorded in the private sector.

This is where politics starts to merge with economics. The Government has an inflation target of 2.5 per cent, but earnings are rising by 5 per cent a year, assuming that trend productivity is rising by 2.5 per cent a year — a heroic assumption that is just about tenable. But should earnings growth rise any further, the inflation target would be in serious jeopardy.

David Walton, chief UK economist at Goldman Sachs, fears that earnings growth could rise to around 6 per cent during 1999 — "unless there is a significant easing in the labour market. But this will only happen if growth weakens sharply".

In the absence of a formal pay policy — which is not on the agenda — wage restraint will be far easier with the help of union leaders, such as John Monks, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, operating in a system of collective bargaining. In a tight labour market, an atomised system of individual deal-making is not that helpful, because the rational response of workers is to maximise the advantage of their own position without taking into account any of the wider implications.

If the need for wage restraint is one reason why the Government would be wise to keep the unions on side, it is not the only one. Income inequality has been far less marked in those countries which have co-ordinated bargaining, so mitigating the worst effects of the flexible labour market would dovetail with the work of the Downing Street social exclusion unit.

A second point is that there is danger that an industrial relations system based on individual rights can become excessively legalistic, because workers have a vested interest in starting grievance procedures. Under a collective bargaining system, the unions act as a filter.

Finally, there is little evidence that the weakening of unions has done much to raise growth and productivity rates, or to prevent Britain falling down the league table of per-capita incomes. On the other hand, de-unionisation has caused plenty of exclusion, exploitation and inequality.

Will Fairness at Work be the remedy to the insecurity bred by 20 years of slash-and-burn laissez-faire? Of course not; but it is a step in the right direction.

White paper's key points

Creates legal right to union recognition
In all firms employing 20 or more workers, there will be two alternative legal routes to union recognition for collective bargaining.

If more than 50 per cent of a particular "bargaining unit" or group of workers are union members, recognition will be automatic. Otherwise, there must be a majority for recognition in a workplace ballot and a minimum yes vote of 40 per cent — a figure subject to review.

If the employer objects to the bargaining unit proposed by a union, it can appeal to a beefed-up Central Arbitration Committee, which can turn down claims if there are inter-union disputes. The process will be timetabled, and recalcitrant employers ultimately liable to the sanction of contempt of court.

Creates right to individual representation
All workers will have the right to be represented by a union official or fellow employee in disciplinary or grievance procedures. Unions will get access to all workplaces where there is a union member.

Cuts qualifying period for unfair dismissal
Employees will now be able to claim unfair dismissal at an industrial tribunal after one year, instead of two as at present. The TUC and the former Labour leader, John Smith, argued that unfair dismissal rights should apply from day one in a job.

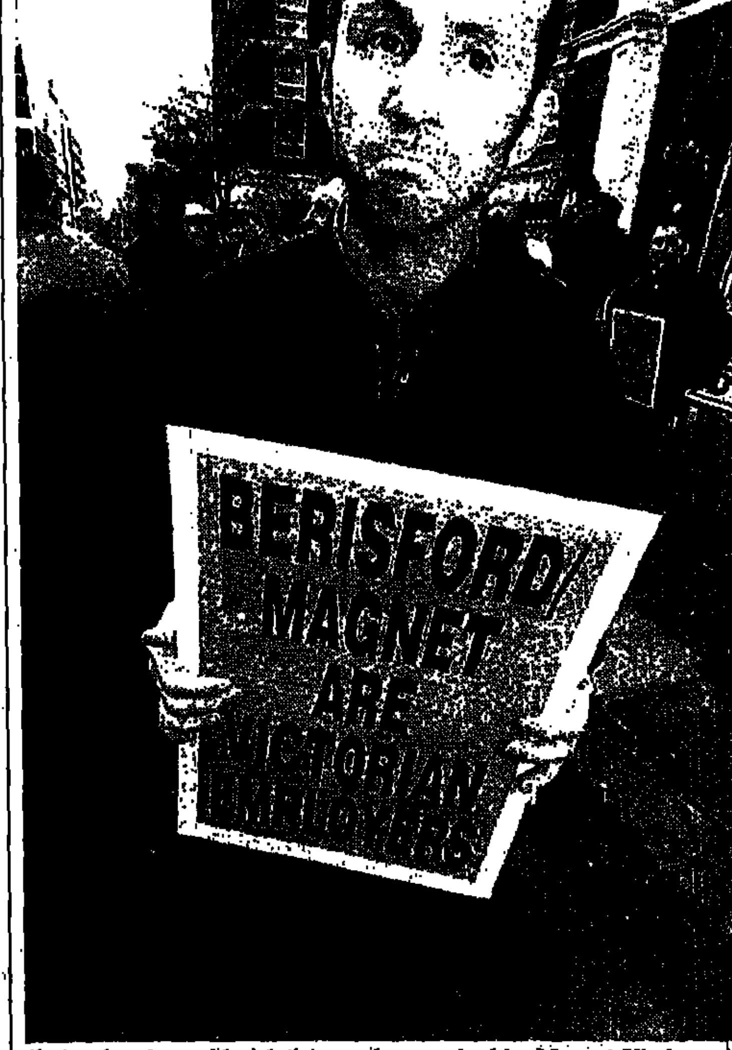
Outlaws discrimination against trade unionists
The blacklisting of trade union activists is to be made unlawful and discrimination against union members — for example, by denying them pay increases if they refuse to sign personal contracts — will also be outlawed.

Abolishes Commissioner for Rights of Trade Union Members
"Crotum", the office set up by the Conservatives to finance legal action against trade unions, is to be scrapped, while the powers of the Trade Union Certification Officer are to be strengthened.

Promise to review contract abuses
These include "zero hours contracts", where workers have to be available without any guarantee of work.

Implements European Parental Leave Directive
All parents will be eligible for up to 12 weeks' unpaid leave while their child is under eight, as agreed under the Social Chapter, as well as time off for urgent family reasons, such as looking after a child who has fallen ill.

Increases maternity leave
The current entitlement of 14 weeks' maternity leave will be increased to 18 weeks, to bring it into line with maternity pay.



Under the planned legislation, workers sacked by Magnet Kitchens in 1966 could have claimed for unfair dismissal PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

Biotech firms built on 'wing and a prayer'

Julia Finch

ONE OF Britain's most senior and respected biochemistry academics last week launched a broadside against the hype surrounding the biotechnology business.

Professor Harold Baum, aged 67, emeritus professor of biochemistry at King's College, London, and a visiting professor in infection and immunity there, warned small investors to steer clear of shares in biotech companies.

Professional fund managers, he said, should take more independent scientific advice before pouring pension fund money and other investment funds into businesses which are built on "a wing and a prayer".

He said that only one in 20 of the companies was likely to succeed in business, and urged directors of biotech firms to demonstrate their faith in the science they are working on by pledging not to cash in share options before they manage to put their products on the market.

His comments were made in the wake of the scandal that has engulfed British Biotech, the UK's biggest drug discovery company, for the past two months. Last week British Bio announced that its chief executive, Keith McCullagh, was stepping down, and it was forced to publish a 34-page circular to shareholders to rebut a catalogue of damaging allegations about the company and its drug discovery work, made by Dr Andrew Millar, its former head of clinical research.

Prof Baum said that the level of ignorance among some fund managers was stunning. "Some don't even understand the basic concepts behind the companies they are investing in," he said.

He said fund managers should consider whether they would back a small oil company just because one geologist insisted there was oil in one particular spot. "Personally, I don't think they would."

Prof Baum believes that further Millar-McCullagh-style clashes between scientists and businessmen within biotech companies are inevitable.

"The entrepreneurs make sure the scientists don't have too much control. In some ways that is good, because scientists get too close to projects and are never willing to pull the plug," he said. At the same time, scientists were "under tremendous pressure to deliver" and "have to work with knowledge that is tremendously price-sensitive".

He singled out City analysts for much of the blame regarding the hype that over-inflated the share prices of biotech companies.

"They make outrageous claims about miracle cures. Scientists don't make those sorts of claims. Analysts hear about trials progressing and immediately say that is good news, and everyone believes it. But quite often, if you actually read the trial reports, they are not so good."

Prof Baum said the British Biotech scandal was "not surprising" and that such an upset in the sector was "inevitable, because of the whole nature of the business. They are working on products which do not exist and may never exist. There may be some real rewards, but British Bio has put a damper on things."

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Buying the truth

Catherine Bennett on British media perceptions of innocence and guilt



*I*TS *UNLIKELY* that the Saudi ambassador to Britain found much to enjoy in BBC TV's Panorama programme last week about the freed British nurses. At least The Death Of A Princess, which caused such offence in 1980, had shown the natives of Saudi Arabia as well turned out, if a trifle harsh on adulterers. On Panorama, the Saudis were depicted as swarthy molesters of innocent British womanhood, led by the wolfish, stubble-stroking figure of the devil himself — Major Hamid.

Put Panorama in its risible perspective, however, and the week surely went better than the ambassador can ever have expected — unless he possesses a peculiarly shrewd understanding of the workings of British tabloids. The nurses may have started the week as the innocent victims of greasy Arab injustice, but they ended it as greedy murder suspects. The Saudis, on the other hand, have been rewarded with some of the most generous British editorials of recent times.

It began when Tony Blair, the Sun's top columnist, said that the freeing of the nurses was "a generous act by the King". How so? If the nurses were innocent, then an outrage had been perpetrated against them. Their freeing might be just, but it was hardly generous. It had depended upon the whim of an absolute monarch. In Australia a relation of murdered Yvonne Gilford protested that the nurses had "got off light". Have the legal processes of Saudi Arabia ever before been criticised for their excessive leniency?

The nurses promptly sold their stories to the Mirror and the Daily Express. Their intention — after making as much money as possible — was to proclaim their innocence and niceness. Inevitably, according to tabloid law, this meant that competitors of the Mirror and the Express would have to proclaim that the nurses were really nasty nurses, possibly guilty as charged. In fact, if the Press Complaints Commission code against payment for "convicted or confessed criminals" was to be invoked against the successful bidders, then the nurses' convictions had to stand. Which meant that the Saudi legal system had to be worthy of respect. And suddenly it was.

In Blair's paper, the Sun — which has, in the past, denounced Arab states as "modern barbarians" — the Saudi ambassador was awarded a full page in which to explain that "this was no kangaroo court, these nurses are guilty of a brutal murder". It was jolly decent of the courts not to have sentenced the women to death, Dr Ghazi A Algosaibi insisted. As for the lack of evidence — "It would be gruesome for me or anyone else to go around presenting evidence, presenting knives and all sorts of things that purport to convict." So that's why the Saudi courts are so squeamish about evidence. Too sensitive.

The Daily Mail, which last year questioned the evidence against the nurses, now warned against "succumbing to a fit of sentimental xenophobia and rushing to put Saudi justice on trial". Could we be so sure, asked an editorial, in a spirit of purest multiculturalism, that the British judicial system is superior to the Saudi one? Well, yes, up to a point, we can. We rarely, for example, imprison people indefinitely without trial. Defendants have access to lawyers. Torture is no longer considered fair. The fact that we don't cut people's heads off any more makes most miscarriages of justice survivable. Last year the Saudis executed 125 people, most of them foreigners.

"Their ways are not our ways," the Mail conceded. "But is our society more moral or less crime-ridden than theirs?" Indeed it is not. Perhaps it has taken the return of the Saudi nurses to show us the way forward.

The Independent decided that the women were convicted by "a properly constituted Saudi court basing its judgment on an old and hallowed body of law". True, their ways are not our ways — "But in a diverse world, we must tolerate different systems of trial and incarceration." In the same paper, Akbar Ahmed, the ubiquitous Islamophobia-spotter, scolded those who had shown ingratitude for King Fahd's "human kindness". In a perfect coda, a letter to the Times proposed that "those who respect the right of Saudi Arabia to determine its own criminal justice system should extend their sympathies to the Saudi authorities for the disrespect shown".

The most shameful aspect of the British media exposed by the nurses' return is not its abject self-fling, nor that it pays for stories, but the way the outcome of a buy-up subsequently dictates the "truth". Here, the murder victim, once a "ruthless loan shark", instantly became a kind lover of children. Her previously avaricious brother became bereaved and mistreated. The angels turned into devils. Most importantly, an unfair trial, illustrative of a grossly unfair system, was depicted as a fair one, in which the women benefited from a lawyer the Mail described as the "George Carman of Saudi Arabia".

It's true, the women did get preferential treatment. Normally, no defence lawyer is allowed in court. Normally, execution follows a murder conviction. According to a recent Amnesty report on Saudi trials: "The summary and secretive nature of trial hearings have made conviction and sentencing a simple exercise even when the penalty is of a grave nature such as flogging, limb amputation and death . . ." But now that our nurses, innocent or guilty, are back, who cares about that? Truly, King Fahd is both merciful and wise.

The Pope versus the aliens

Polly Toynbee on a Vatican campaign against paganism in the pews

*T*HE Pope is preparing an encyclical against superstition. Oxymoron, or what? The Pontifical Commission for Culture is writing a report about the dangers of people believing in magic, levitations, visitations by spirits, aliens, angels and the like. The mind boggles. Some might suggest he start with the Turin Shroud. And what of transubstantiation, virgin visions, appearances of the stigmata, to say nothing of ascensions and assumptions? Since this past Sunday celebrated Whitsuntide, what of spirits descending in fire to worshippers rolling on the floor and speaking in tongues?

No, it is the New Age the Pope will condemn. The Vatican was recently told that New Age practices and beliefs were rife inside its own convents and monasteries. Bishops across the world are anxiously reporting paganism breaking out in the pews. Crystals, pyramids, astrology, psychics, aliens and Eastern mysticism are invading the Church. New Age treatments are regularly available in Catholic retreats, offering aromatherapy, Sufi dancing and use of the enneagram — a nine-sided figure — with rebirthing and mind-expanding techniques. Where are they to draw the line, the bishops ask. When does meditation and chanting become heresy? How does the Church persuade people to believe their own superstition, while damning others'? Eternal vigilance is the price of true dogma.

If it's happening in the Roman Catholic Church, it's even more of a problem for Protestants, especially evangelicals. "It's just so galling," says Keith Ewing of the Evangelical Alliance. "The hard evidence for the resurrection is extraordinarily compelling compared with all this."

There is now a growing group calling themselves Christaquarians, merging Christ into the New Age. St James's Anglican church in London's Piccadilly organises a programme called Alternatives, which includes the "transformative and miraculous powers" of group chant, collective memory experiences connecting people to their ancestors, pets and the environment, meditative drumming and "100 per cent Happiness". The programme comes with this "Friendly Disclaimer" on the cover: "Although St James's Church, in its openness of heart and mind, includes Alternatives, the ideas in the programme are not representative of the Church itself."

The annual, bizarre Mind Body Spirit Festival takes place in London this week. It has become a trade fair for a big industry, replete with stalls for New Age marketing and PR agencies. Here you can awaken the goddess within, heal your inner child, release you psychic energy, unblock your pathways, or have an out-of-body experience with Don the gong master. You can have your eyeballs massaged and your aura photographed. The big commercial growth areas like Feng Shui have become as much a part of the interior decorating scene as wallpaper.

This stuff has entered seamlessly into everyday living. The supernatural permeates the national psyche as never before. A recent ICM poll showed 63 per cent of people in Britain believe in the paranormal. A Leeds university study shows the paranormal has taken over from conventional religious belief: 55 per cent believe in second sight and 67 per cent in astrology. A British Social Attitudes Survey shows only one in five believes unequivocally in a God, though 65 per cent call themselves Christians culturally. Another survey showed 22 per cent of all Europeans now believe in reincarnation. In California, 25 per cent of people say they are alien "walk-ins" — taken over by an invasion of the soul from outer space.

Fr Peter Fleetwood, the British priest who acts as secretary to the Pontifical Commission, says a line will be drawn: "Reincarnation, for instance, is out of the question. But there is much we could learn from the methodology of the New Age. Their holistic approach does offer a warmer sense of belonging, of personal significance and respect for the planet. We're not so good at those things. They are so well-packaged and well-marketed these days — it's a big challenge for us."

The doctrinal issues are utterly puzzling to any outsider. Distinguishing which miracles and supernatural phenomena are acceptable is beyond rational contemplation for those of us as bemused by the eucharist as by Incan Heavy Energy Digestion.

Fr Fleetwood's strongest case against New Agers is that they are individualistic and narcissistic, so busy exploring personal experience that they have no time for community or social concern. They have no community organisation or moral codes, because belief in the paranormal requires nothing of you, no self-denial, no love. It is spiritual materialism — getting what you can, no strings, no rules, a personal freedom religion. I was too polite to point out to Fr Fleetwood that one superstition looks as absurd as another from the outside — and as for its moral effects, consider the damage the Catholic Church does with the Pope's barbaric teaching on contraception and abortion.

But the real question is why belief in any kind of supernatural has taken such firm root, just as we seemed at last to be approaching an age of reason. Peter Clark, professor of the history and sociology of religion at King's College, London, says: "We live in the most superstitious age ever." He notes glumly that a psychic will get 1,500 people into a lecture theatre, while a philosopher is lucky to draw 20. Why?

Forty years ago, he says, no one would have guessed there would be such a wholesale swallowing of superstitious belief. There is, he says, a new sense of the limits of science — plus highly commercialised selling of New Agery. He thinks there never was an age of enlightenment. Society was strictly governed by codes, including rules on what you could believe. Now that people are freer to live as they like in a pluralist world, they are also freer to think what they like. "Forty years ago, if someone told their neighbour they believed in UFOs, they'd have been treated as a lunatic. Now anything goes." (Consider the Daily Mail, uncritically full of New Age stuff they'd have condemned as dangerous hippie nonsense a few decades ago.)

Dr Lewis Wolpert, with all the brutal determinism of evolutionary psychology, suggests the religious impulse was programmed into humans from the day they acquired the knowledge of their own inevitable death: without this deluding self-defence, primitive mankind would have been dangerously weakened by depression and fear.

True or not, the human project is to overcome animal instinct and impose reason on nature. Does it matter if we believe a lot of superstitious nonsense? Yes, because truth and empirical evidence matter.

Multinationals are moving into countries that were no-go areas before reform of mining and forestry laws. The result, says **John Vidal**, will be catastrophic

Baptism of fire

A MUNGME tribal leader Yosepha Alomang, a mother of 10, should be in Britain. But as she boarded the plane this month in Irian Jaya, Indonesia, to head for London and the Rio Tinto annual meeting, she was stopped by the military.

Had she come, Ms Alomang would have told the mining firm's corporate shareholders a harrowing tale of torture at the hands of the authorities. Four years ago she was imprisoned without charges, sexually abused and threatened with being shot. Held for a month in a filthy room, she was made to eat her own faeces.

Ms Alomang is one of many outspoken critics of the huge Freeport copper mine, high in the mountains of Irian Jaya, which is part-owned by Rio Tinto. For years the mine has been the centre of well-documented human rights violations against indigenous groups.

It is also an example of an increasingly common trend that sees governments working in the interests of global corporations, against their own people. The mine subsidises the army by more than £30 million a year, and, like Shell in Nigeria or BP in Colombia, its owners distance themselves from atrocities carried out to "protect" its operation.

The trend is not new. Chinese, Latin American, Indonesian and former Soviet governments have all evicted people wholesale and practised something akin to genocide to make way for massive projects such as dams, and to encourage logging and heavy industries. But the globalisation of capital after communism and the rise of international trade bodies are unleashing new forces.

The extractive industries — especially mining, oil, and timber — are becoming the new epicentre of human rights violations, land grabs, political destabilisation, environmental devastation and, increasingly, outright conflict. As countries bid to offer the lowest levels of environmental, labour and consumer regulation, abuses are rising.

The situation is set to explode in the next decade as the companies move in on some of the world's most vulnerable people and environments.

Forced largely by "structural adjustment" policies, where international banks and leading industrial nations bail out indebted economies in return for access to their resources, 70 countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and eastern Europe have reformed their mining and forestry laws in the past six years in favour of international companies, which, in turn, have rushed to the areas once denied them.

Led by Canadian, Australian, United States and British concerns, the global miners have invested more than \$5 billion in exploring developing countries since 1992. Like the global oilmen and foresters, they have negotiated long, renewable leases, vast concessions, tax breaks, rights to evict communities and exemption from laws in return for down-payments and the promise of jobs and exports.

The first casualty may be democracy. The companies negotiate in secret with governments, do not consult with those whose lives they will affect and undermine the state's authority. "The link between governments and governed is being weakened . . . The governed, increasingly, have no role," argues Dr Tony Evans of Southampton university in the UK, who is researching the links between human rights abuses and the globalised world economy. "It is precisely those corporations and banks that are increasingly global in scale that have gained influence over state policy," he says.

The second human casualties are the tribal people who occupy the lands that the companies are being given exclusive rights both to explore and to exploit. Most of the new mining and forestry is, or will be, on a massive scale in the traditional homelands of some of the world's poorest people.

"The scale of the crisis for tribal groups should not be underestimated," says Richard Garside of Survival International. Large-scale mining or logging of the kind now moving in to many developing countries inevitably involves pollution, often the disruption of water courses and the undermining of subsistence farming. The poorest countries are usually the ones with the weakest environmental standards, and least able to control companies' activities.

"This sort of hit-and-run development leaves communities with little option in how they develop," says a spokesman for the Amerindian Peoples Association in Georgetown, Guyana, which with pitiful resources is trying to resist Malaysian and Korean logging companies while fighting for land rights and preparing communities to deal with mining companies that are beginning to explore their areas.

"Where the companies say that they bring jobs and social benefits, the reality is that the work they offer is unskilled, the benefits they bring only extend to a few people who work for them. People's livelihood always suffers," he says.

A worldwide pattern of governments and companies working in tandem and using divisive tactics against mounting opposition is emerging. Where companies need the permission of local communities to start work, they offer bribes, sweeteners and promises of help that can leave communities with little beyond short-term gain.

"The communities do not know how to negotiate. They do not know their rights or the monetary value of their resources and often sell them for a pittance," says a Filipino development worker.

And where communities resist their entry, the companies and governments subvert the democratic process, setting up alternative leaders and splitting villages.

In many countries, government troops evict communities that have no land titles before companies arrive. The companies employ paramilitaries to harass people, block roads, and isolate activists. "There have been serious cases of human rights violations and people killed in the Philippines, Indonesia and South America," says Survival International.

As with Shell in Nigeria and BP in Colombia, the presence of the mining, oil or logging companies is destabilising the state, acting as a magnet for separatists and rebels.

In Colombia oil companies are such a regular target for guerrillas that Western operators can hardly function. They are forced to employ the military and even provide arms, and the list of human rights abuses has escalated. In the Philippines old leftist paramilitary groups are recruiting new people and taking up the cause of the tribal groups.

The tribal people are increasingly desperate, having little access to legal help and few people to turn to except the churches and under-resourced non-government groups.

Many are contemplating physical resistance. The Bontok people of Mainit in the Philippines recently sent a petition to the international community. "These [mining] operations will destroy our source of livelihood, like farming and small-scale mining, due to forest destruction and denudation. They will destroy our rice fields and rivers, desecrate burial grounds and subvert our customs and traditions. Let this be a warning to those who are trying to intrude in our ancestral lands. Blood will be the answer."

The B'laan people in South Cotabato in the Philippines have seen tracts of their ancestral lands fenced off by a mining company. Survival International reports that the Filipino army and security guards now bar access to farmers and hunters. Tribal leaders have sworn an oath to defend their lands: "If we get killed on our land we are also ready to kill," says Datu Tong Cañon.

Political and social tensions are mounting. In Indonesia and the East Asia, where the economic miracle of the 1980s was largely based on land grabs and resource exploitation by businessmen in league with politicians, the poorest will be hit again, says Frances Carr, of the ecological justice group Down to Earth.

The economic crisis and the massive International Monetary Fund bailout of the Eastern economies will make things worse, she says. "Indonesia will depend even more on selling off its resources to all comers. The tribal groups, who depend on natural resources more than anyone just to live, will suffer more. They will just become further dispossessed."

Struggling against the tide . . . a child looks on as logs are rolled into the Corantijn river in Guyana, where the Amerindian Peoples Association is trying to resist deforestation and mining PHOTO: JONATHAN KAPLAN

Fatal attraction of partners in crime

I**N THE* **growing debate about corporations and their responsibility for human rights, an entire industry is under siege, *writes Arvind Ganesan.

In their search for finite resources, oil companies must partner governments who may have dismal human rights records — witness Total's involvement with the Burmese junta in constructing the Yadana natural-gas pipeline.

In Colombia the drive to develop oil fields has landed companies in the middle of a war zone, where all parties to the conflict commit human rights violations. To ensure oil is extracted, the companies have made contractual security arrangements with state forces that Human Rights Watch called "the worst violators of human rights in the hemisphere".

For their part, abusive governments need the oil companies badly. Few have robust economies — free markets need free people — and these regimes are generally starved of cash. Oil revenue helps them stay in power.

Meanwhile partnering big oil companies also gives them international prestige — another resource that's scarce for human rights abusers. Conversely, oil-consuming countries such as the United States, France or the UK want to maintain energy supplies, increase their global influence, support their corporate citizens and ensure that their exchequers flourish. Rarely will a government shy away from oil.

So it is easy to see why governments sideline human rights. Abdala Bucaram, former president of Ecuador, commented on a possible strike in 1996 by the oil workers union: "If the oil workers seek to halt the production of a basic and strategic service such as oil, I will personally witness the police and the armed forces giving them a thrashing to make them return to work."

Today such examples abound: when the Nigerian government resorts to repression to deal with communities protesting against the impact of oil development, when counter-insurgency operations are intertwined with natural-gas development in the Tenasserim region of Burma, or when the international community fails to address the human rights crisis in Algeria for fear of jeopardising oil and gas contracts.

The public is aware of the crucial role of transnational corporations in an era when influence of nation states is diminishing. In response, non-governmental groups have launched campaigns to hold corporations accountable for human rights violations, along with government counterparts.

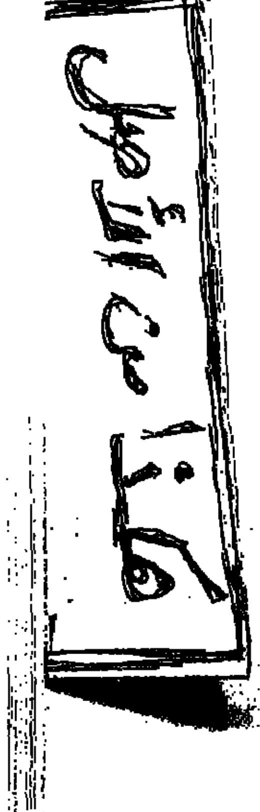
The best-known example is the coalition of environmental and human rights organisations that have campaigned against the activities of Shell in Nigeria and BP in Colombia. Reeling from accusations of complicity in human rights violations in Nigeria and Colombia, Shell and BP have taken a first step and acknowledged the concept of human rights. They stand in stark contrast to US and French counterparts such as Exxon and Total, which ignore the issue.

But it's not enough for the companies to issue broad statements. Human rights information should be included in their risk analyses, and internal procedures should be implemented to ensure human rights policies are known and enforced at every level of management.

Human Rights Watch is now monitoring the Caspian Sea, where huge oil and natural gas reserves are being developed. Familiar problems are arising: abusive security forces, inadequate judiciaries and systems of dispute resolution, and discrimination against political and ethnic minorities.

Many projects are not in place yet, so corporations can still act to prevent their own complicity in human rights abuses. They should start by incorporating human rights information into their country-risk analyses.

Arvind Ganesan works on corporate issues for Human Rights Watch in the US. Website: http://www.hrw.org



A hard driver on the road to peace

The Northern Ireland Secretary has taken great risks to bring peace to the province. **Julia Langdon** finds the keys to her courage


Mo Mowlam: 'She deals with men very effectively without losing her femininity' PHOTOGRAPH: CRISPIN RODWELL

SHE can walk into a men-only bar in a working men's club in her Redcar constituency, march up to the counter, pick up someone's glass and drink his beer. That is the equivalent of sacrilege in these parts, but there isn't so much as a murmur. And in the soulless heart of a Belfast ghetto she can put her arm round the wife of a Maze prisoner, stroke her baby, then casually take a bite out of the child's sandwich. He actually stops crying, possibly from sheer surprise.

While the infant doesn't realise he has lost part of his lunch to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, his instinctive reaction is similar to that of anyone else.

"She just has this way," says Brian Roberts, leader of Redcar and Cleveland Council, who was Mo Mowlam's first agent and the man inadvertently responsible for putting her into the House of Commons. "It doesn't matter whether you're Lord So-and-So or whoever up here, she just has this way of coming across."

Mowlam is suitably dismissive about the extent to which her character, personality and style contribute to her evident success as a politician, although any observer can see that while she has a sure touch with people that is undoubtedly instinctive, she also knows how well it works. The word she usually uses about herself is "pragmatic".

"At school I wanted to be a medical doctor but I did the wrong O levels," she says. "Looking back now, with a better understanding of myself, it was because being a doctor is practical, because it gets results. I like things that are concrete, specific. When I go home at the weekend and have a spare couple of hours, I do one of two things: I put the clothes in the washing machine or I fill the dishwasher." It drives her husband, Jon Norton, mad, she says blithely, for she is clearly accustomed to driving people mad.

"He looks at me and says: 'You don't have to do that.' But I just want to get results. And an hour later there is the result of it!" She gesticulates, triumphantly. That, she adds somewhat tangentially, is why she is a member of the Labour party — results; clean washing; changing people's lives. That's what it's all about, in Northern Ireland particularly. What she seeks for people's lives there is normality.

Mowlam is an academic, but not ideological. She lectured in politics at Newcastle university for four years until 1983, then moved to adult education at Northern College, Barnsley, because she had a sense that she would be able to achieve more there. Her mother, Tina Mowlam, says she got fed up teaching politics to kids who were never going to use it; instead she wanted to help people who had never had a decent chance.

Marjorie Mowlam may be interested to learn — for she is very vague about this — that she was born in Watford in 1949. Her mother says so: Tina is one of the few people to use her middle child's given name. She became "Mo" from Mowlam — not as a short form of Marjorie — when she was at secondary school. (Her late father, Frank, went by the same monicker at work in the Post Office.)

There is a lot of her father in her. For one thing the phenomenal memory for names. She usually attributes this to a bit of part-time work as a telephonist alongside her mother in a Coventry department store, but Tina says it is inherited, and adds: "Frank's gift was that he was very good with people. He never closed his office door. He was always available — now that sounds like Marjorie, doesn't it?"

Frank never had the chance to develop his skills, however. Tina thinks he was a thwarted man. "He passed for the grammar school, but his father wouldn't let him go. He said that what had been good enough for him was good enough for his son. Frank left school at 14 and became a telegraph boy at Watford, but he had a great stubborness. It was: 'I'll do it, even if you don't help me do it'."

He succeeded in working his way upwards through the Post Office hierarchy, but he was an alcoholic; he didn't work for some years before his death in 1981. There were many problems when the three children — Jean, Marjorie and Jimmy were small. Money was always short. "It was tough," says Tina. "There was always a disaster waiting around the corner. You'd think you were OK, and then you'd find that the mortgage hadn't been paid."

The influence of an alcoholic parent on the children can be considerable. The agony aunt Virginia Ironside wrote recently that it had turned her, like many others, into "a compulsive carer". Interesting, then, that if Mowlam ever leaves politics she says she would like to provide respite care for families with disabled children.

Despite her father's drink problem there were happy times, too. After Richmond Drive, Watford, they lived beside the canal in Shaftesbury Avenue, Southall. There were picnics in the park, outings to Burnham Beeches. "It wasn't easy at times. My mother worked hard. I ended up feeling more sorry and sad for him: a competent man who ruined his life through drink."

They moved to Coventry at about the time Marjorie went to secondary school, and by then her forceful personality was already evident. She became head girl of Coundon Court Comprehensive (an elected position under a system devised by her history teacher Miss Morley, in which equal votes were granted to staff and pupils) and decided, aged about 14, that fire practices were a waste of time because they were advertised in advance, so she initiated her own. She deliberately rang a handbell and, in alarm, the school was evacuated with chaotic results. Thus proving her point.

While she is clearly good at personal relations, her personal relationships, however, were more problematic until she met and subsequently married her husband, Jon Norton, a banker five years her junior. Her own often-quoted phrase is about her "spectacularly untidy" earlier love life: it included Martin, with whom she went to the United States for five years in the seventies. They split up and she came back to Britain, but it was a long time before either of them formed a strong relationship again. Martin is now settled with a partner and child and "my Mum still talks to his Mum", Mowlam says. There was another boyfriend called Dan, who drowned while swimming in Tallahassee, Florida, which seems to have affected her quite profoundly as the first death of someone to whom she was close.

After Mowlam's election to Westminster she had a relationship with the journalist Colin Hughes who was married with two children. He left his family for her. Hughes is said to have adored Mowlam. Someone remembers him "gazing at her as if she was made of ice and would melt if he looked away". But the cause of the breakdown is said to have been her intense commitment to her work and her "child-blindness" — her inability to recognise quite the extent to which his children mattered to him.

If that was the case, it is not an error she has repeated. She adores Jon's two children, relishes the time she spends with them but is typically pragmatic about the circumstances. "I'm not responsible for haircuts or dentist appointments," she says. "I just get the pleasure of their company."

THE difference between opposition and government, Mowlam says, is what she is able to offer people. She used to have constituents in her surgeries who couldn't pay their electricity bills and to whom she could only offer the political equivalent of an Elastoplast: could the church help? What about a forces' charity? "Now we're going to to do it properly, which is why I'm pleased with the welfare crap," she says, pausing only to murmur that it could have been better presented.

Across the bloody history of the past 30 years in Northern Ireland there have been myriad suggestions about possible ways forward from the intractable political stalemate. But it is only since the appointment of the first woman secretary of state, someone who is clearly tough, but also vivacious and egalitarian, that the character of the incumbent can now be seen as having been such a vital part of the dramatic progress that has been made.

The former Labour leader Neil Kinnock first put Mowlam on the Opposition front bench as spokeswoman for Northern Ireland in 1988. He describes her strength as being "inclusive". She is very strong, "tungsten tough", he says.

But her own vulnerability, as a result of the brain tumour from which she was found to be suffering shortly before last year's general election, is perhaps also a part of this complicated equation.

The tumour, the size of a small orange, was in the left-hand front of her head. When it was diagnosed at the beginning of last year she told Tony Blair, her husband and his daughter Henrietta — and then went out as planned to see a film. There was an anxious period before analysis revealed that the growth was benign. She underwent radiotherapy and steroid treatment, which led to her weight gain. It was only last July that she was given the all-clear. Her hair is now growing back, mousy and curly, to her considerable surprise.

There are not many who dissent from the view that it is the personality of Mowlam which has been crucial to the course of the last year in Northern Ireland, and there are some who believe it is the primary reason that the Good Friday agreement was even possible. Ken Lindsay, her private secretary in the Northern Ireland Office, who also served her Tory predecessor, Sir Patrick Mayhew, is so convinced of the point that, unusually for a civil servant, he is prepared to be quoted on the subject. "We wouldn't have got where we are without her," he says. "She's pushy. She's done things other people wouldn't have done."

She is not without her critics, of course. Most of these are to be found among the Northern Ireland unionists, some of whom have found her difficult to deal with, claiming that she has conceded far too much to Sinn Fein. Some — notably Ken Maginnis of the Ulster Unionist Party — are said to hate her, a passion apparently fuelled by an inability to cope with her aura. When Ian Paisley, the hellfire and brimstone leader of the Democratic Unionists, heard of her plans to invite Elton John to give a concert at Hillsborough he commented: "And now she's bringing in the Sodomites."

According to Clive Soley, chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party and himself a former Northern Ireland spokesman in Opposition, it is important that she is a woman. "She has got this incredible ability as a woman politician of dealing with men very effectively without losing her femininity — and you have never seen that used more effectively than in Northern Ireland. The unionists don't know how to deal with a woman, particularly one who has the ability to be both feminine and strong at the same time — it's a very sophisticated balance. At the end of the day, although I don't think they like her, I think they respect her."

And here is a cameo from the last days of the Stormont talks in the run-up to Good Friday that possibly helps to explain why they respect her and why, in turn, Northern Ireland now stands the best chance for decades of achieving the peace that has eluded it.

Discussions were at yet another critical point and things were going wrong. The Secretary of State was in a huddle in a hallway having an intense conversation with Gerry Adams. "You bloody well get on and do it," somebody overheard her saying. "Otherwise I'll head-butt you."

'I like things that are concrete, specific. When I go home at the weekend and have a spare couple of hours, I do one of two things: I put the clothes in the washing machine or I fill the dishwasher'

Letter from Chad Robert Lacville

A whole load of balls

THE woman in Mayo Kebbi refused to wash my white shirt. She said the local water would colour it orange. Her husband explained that their water is full of iron. "It is so strong that Chadian babies walk at nine months."

My Rwandan agronomist colleague thought that the water looked evil. He refused to drink anything except bottled water, bottled fruit juice, or beer. But the orange water did me no harm — at least not the harm you are thinking of.

My intestines went the other way, under the heavy influence of the local staple food known as *la boule tchadienne*. My Chadian colleagues spoke with joy about splitting open *la boule*. The expression made me wince, since *boule* is also the French word for testicle (at least in the sort of French my adolescent children speak). Admittedly sheep's testicle is a delicacy, but it's not the sort of thing you want to split open every day. So I remained silent and waited to find out what I was going to eat with these villagers of southwestern Chad.

The first time I saw a line of women bringing lunch, I thought they were carrying on their heads a set of black woods for playing lawn bowls. It seemed unlikely, since there is no green grass for 600km. Could they play on sand? *Boule* is also the French name for a wooden ball, but surely Chadian farmers have better things to do than play bowls? What else could those round things be?

I discovered that each *boule* is a round ball of black guinea corn flour, about the size of a decapitated baby's head. It is stodgy, but digestible. I was lucky to find it digestible, since I ate it twice a day, every day for the next week. I became reasonably expert at breaking open the baby's head, digging my fingers deep into the flesh, and tearing off a lump. With the thumb, you mould this into a scoop and plunge it into the communal bowl of sauce. The sauce is made slimy with okra or with a local leaf. There is an easy way to measure your mastery of the art of scooping the paste-and-sauce mess into your mouth: count the number of splashes on your shirt. This question took on added significance, once I discovered that I couldn't wash my white shirts. My available clothing stock was diminished to two beige cotton safari suits. The Sahelian climate came to my rescue: for, of course, you can wash your shirts at 10am and they are dry before midday.

There are (in my limited experience) black, grey and brown *boules*, depending on the sorghum (or guinea corn) used. The lighter ones sometimes include maize flour mixed with millet and manioc. As staples go, the Chadians do quite well for taste and nutrition: better, for example, than the Ugandans, who eat a plantain *matoke*, which has bulk with no nourishment, more palatable than Malian *tô*, which is usually rendered disgusting by the inclusion of potash (wood ash) to help set the paste. Ugh!

The farmers' co-operatives provided multiple Chadian sauces to disguise their boules. There were fish sauces and meat sauces, some slimy and others oily, and a lot of them delicious. *Boule* is a strong man's food, but I am a feeble foreigner.

And by the end of a whole week I admit that sauce is, well . . . sauce. The first meal I ordered on reaching a town was composed entirely of salads and vegetables. I am happy to announce that all is now back to normal below the belt.

Konishiki stares down an opponent during a bout at the Royal Albert Hall PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS COLE

Sumo star bows out with huge haircut

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

IN THE traditional world of sumo, there is only one way to celebrate the retirement of a wrestler who has had an outstanding career: throw one helluva haircut in his honour.

Fittingly then, the retirement of Konishiki, the first foreign-born wrestler to reach sumo's second-highest rank and the heaviest grappler in the sport's 1,300-year history, was expected to be marked with a lavish *danpatsu shiki* (top-knot-cutting ceremony) this week.

"It is very traditional. The whole day is dedicated to me," explains Konishiki, whose affability and determination have made him one of Japan's most popular celebrities. "All the top wrestlers will be there. There will be regular sumo, and sumo singing and drumming. We have about 11,000 people and three or four hundred will come up and cut my hair."

Lounging around his stable in a T-shirt and garishly coloured shorts while other loincloth-clad wrestlers practise, Konishiki looks as out of place as a cowboy in an *ukiyo-e* print.

But his appearance (permissible because he quit competition late last year) belies the Hawaiian-born wrestler's efforts to adapt to the sumo environment.

His secret, he says, was to learn the ways of those around him. "You have to try to get involved, to learn their jokes, to get into the flow. Every time you fight it, you get drowned. It is like swimming against the current. When you are with them, you try to be like them. When your time comes, you can be yourself."

Such lessons were hard learnt. At his peak, Konishiki stirred up a row between Tokyo and Washington after he reportedly suggested that the Japanese Sumo Assocation may have been racist in denying him promotion to *yokuzuna*, the sport's top rank. He distanced himself from the comment, but the damage was done and his performances were never quite the same (although another Hawaiian-born wrestler, Akebono, became *yokuzuna* not long after).

"I have no regrets," Konishiki says of his 16-year career. "One of my last goals was to make it as a grand champion. But that's that. I can say I gave it 100 per cent effort, but it just didn't fall into the right place."

The Dump Truck, as he is also known, is now on a three-year diet to lose almost half of his 35-stone bulk, which his stable master advised him to put on to make up for his lack of sumo experience. "For me, it was good to be big. It was a deliberate technique, but I lost track of my weight after I got injured and I couldn't exercise so much."

Although Konishiki was visiting hospitals two or three times a month until he retired, to be treated for painful calf and knee injuries, he takes issue with a complaint by the chairman of sumo's governing body that today's wrestlers are more vulnerable because they are too fat.

"You cannot just say weight is a bad thing. Some smaller guys get hurt because they lack weight. There are more injuries these days because sumo wrestlers are busier than in the past and there is not much time for muscles to recuperate."

He will have the opportunity to put his views into practice after retirement, when he will change his name to Sanoyama and become a coach.

He plans to tackle the waning interest in sumo. Last year, for the first time this decade, there were unsold tickets for some tournaments. There has also been a decline in the number of young wrestlers willing to put up with the gruelling lifestyle of a trainee.

"Young people don't have enough information about it because the media image is very stereotypical," Konishiki says. "We have to show the other side of sumo! the human side."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHAT* is the origin of the phrase "Scot-free"? Does it have anything to do with the Scots' reputation for not paying for drinks?**

ONE derivation of "scot" goes back from modern French *payer son écot* (to contribute to common expenses) to the 13th century Old French *escot*, which meant the same thing. The origin is the Frankish *skot* or tax.

"Scot" probably also has Scandinavian origins, from which it passed into Old and Middle English; and the phrase is found in the current and other forms such as "Scotch-" and "shot-free".

Voltaire tells us in Candide (1759) of how the hero and his companion attempt to pay their *écot* after dining at an inn in Eldorado. Their offer is greeted with roars of laughter, because in this ideal land the government pays for meals in state-run hostelries. So they get off scot-free. — *Charlotte Houlton, Morpeth, Northumberland*

***EVERY* biography of Michael Faraday says that he was a Sandemanian. What do or did Sandemanians believe?**

THE Sandemanians were a small Protestant fundamentalist sect founded in Scotland around 1730 by Presbyterian minister John Glas and continued by his son-in-law, Robert Sandeman. Dissenters from the established Presbyterian church, their core belief was in the essential spirituality of Christianity, which led them to oppose all political or secular manifestations.

Their austere Biblical literalism was focused on the New Testament, which they believed offered no support for a national church. In the spirit of primitive Christianity, the Sandemanian churches appointed their elders — there were, of course, no ministers — according to the precepts of St Paul, with no regard to education, occupation or social status. The sect condemned accumulation of wealth and insisted that money should never be saved but distributed among the needy. Footwashing was one of its rituals.

Sandemanianism provided Michael Faraday — perhaps the greatest experimental scientist of the 19th century — with spiritual sustenance throughout his life and it was unquestionably the most important influence on his life and scientific work. He was once temporarily excluded for failing to attend


Michael Faraday: scientist, dissenter and Sandemanian

worship one Sunday "without good reason" — he was attending dinner with Queen Victoria!

It could be argued that Faraday's belief in the unity of forces and nature — which underpinned his formulation of "field theory" — was linked to his Sandemanian convictions, and that his caution regarding speculative interpretations of experimental facts paralleled the Sandemanian adherence to Biblical literalism. (The biography Michael Faraday: Sandemanian And Scientist, is recommended.)

As a dissenter there was no question of burial at Westminster Abbey, so Faraday joined Karl Marx, George Eliot and others at Highgate cemetery. — *Paul Underhill, Swindon*

Any answers?

WHAT* is the origin of the expression "jay walker"? — *Richard Warner, Adelaide, Australia

HOW* do manufacturers of condoms "electronically" test them? — *Jon Dickinson, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

"CLUB"* sandwich, "club" soda. Which club, where? — *Tom Hawkins, London

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Photo finish

Liz Jobey tours the greatest hits of the V&A's new Canon gallery

THIS MONTH the Victoria & Albert Museum in London finally opened a permanent gallery to show some of the 300,000 prints in the national collection of photographic art. The opening was the culmination of 10 years of planning for Mark Haworth-Booth, the V&A's curator of photographs. And after years at the mercy of what he calls a "stop-go" economy, he has found himself with more than he expected: 400 square metres of exhibition space on the ground floor of the main museum building and a five-year sponsorship from Canon to go with it.

As far as the physical space goes, he has settled for a rather scholarly and restrained beige cube. The pictures are well spaced and hung rather low, so it's possible to see right in to the detail of the older, smaller pictures without craning upwards.

This inaugural exhibition contains some of the collection's greatest hits. It covers the history of the medium in just under 100 prints, which also illustrate Haworth-Booth's written history of the collection, Photography: An Independent Art, published last year.

There is a nice counterpoint between the flow of the photographs, which seem to represent regular links in an unbroken chain of systematic purchasing, and the text, which reveals just how chaotic and confused the buying process really was.

Looking closely at the purchase dates on certain pictures — Steichen, Man Ray, Lee Miller, Hoyningen Heune — you see that they were bought 50 or 70 years after they were taken. They were acquired under the directorship of Roy Strong, who, like Henry Cole 100 years before, made the acquisition and exhibition of photography a priority. When Strong left the museum in 1987, he had balanced the heavy holdings of 19th century work with a number of important photographers from the more modern end.

Along with the gifts of prints from photographers, the department has acquired books and prints from the V&A's own exhibitions — which is how it came to own John Deakin's 1952 portrait of Francis Bacon and David Bailey's 1964 portrait of Mick Jagger in a fur-trimmed hood.

The first paper negatives, which Fox Talbot made by laying an object on salt-washed sensitised paper in the summer of 1835, will be familiar to most people interested in the history of photography, but it's worth stopping to think that 150 years of scientifically generated images grew from these simple exposures.

The first half-century was largely a race to the patents office, and the battle between France and Britain is represented by two daguerrotypes. One is the view down Parliament Street taken by a mysterious Monsieur de Ste Croix, who arrived in England in 1839, demonstrated his skills, then disappeared, leaving the suspicion that Daguerre himself had been doing a little research.

Two of the most prized collections are represented by a beautiful print that catches the old softened stone of Roslyn Chapel, from Roger Fenton's series on cathedrals, and Gustave Le Gray's The Great Wave At Sette, probably the first image to immobilise the sea on film. News from the colonies was brought by Algernon Hall's pictures of the newly minted township of Beechworth, Australia, in 1866. Five years earlier, a photograph of the simple wooden Guard House on the Columbia River, taken by the Royal Engineers, suggests the uneasy conquest of uncharted territory.

In 1865, Julia Margaret Cameron was selling her first batch of prints to the museum. Cole would be her patron, offering her the use of a studio within the museum and touring her work around the country. Her three pictures here — The Dream, Floss And Iolanthe, and her portrait of Tennyson — all have that slightly out-of-focus, romantic-dream quality that makes them more like spiritual apparitions than people.



Meret Oppenheim, a Swiss surrealist, photographed by Man Ray in 1993, on show at the V&A

There are two breaks in the show. One is physical, as the gallery shifts scale and dimension to accommodate Helen Chadwick's installation. The Oval Court, a deep blue pool made from photocopied drawings that reaches up the side of the gallery in collaged panels. The other is a conceptual break, between a black-and-white picture by the South African photojournalist David Goldblatt, of a small white boy and his black nursemaid, and William Eggleston's image of a kitchen sink flooded in yellow morning light. Something happens here that isn't so obviously to do with black and white or colour, or politics, but with interpretation, which the Eggleston pictures leaves open.

The final pictures move uneasily into the late eighties and nineties, with colour photographs by Nan Goldin and Richard Billingham, documenting their own lives. They call themselves photographic artists, but if there is any problem about the V&A starting a gallery for photographs when photographers are heading back for the art world, Mark Haworth-Booth seems unconcerned. It is, after all, an argument that has gone on for as long as the museum has been collecting.

So much telly and so little sex . . .

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE HUMAN BODY (BBC1) began with a machine-gun barrage of statistics. Robert Winston cradled new-born Charlotte ("A bit of fat, a little sugar, a bit of protein, 75 per cent water"). In her 79 years of life, she would, he said, spend six months in the loo, watch more than 12 years of TV, talk on the phone for two-and-a-half years, kiss for two-and-a-half weeks, grow two metres of hair up her nose, work for just over eight years, have 150 friends, five lovers and sex 2,580 times.

Poignantly (and this I do believe), two of her eight great grandchildren will not remember her name. Charlotte! It's Charlotte!

Time has not withered the exuberance of Winston's moustache since I saw it 20 years ago on Your Life In Their Hands. It deserves a statistic of its own. I am not so sure about Charlotte's viewing, though. I make that about six hours a night. Now I view six hours a night and I find it hard to fit in five lovers. Unless, of course, you have sex with the TV on. Does that count or is it cheating?

Winston's trust in statistics is touching in a grown man. He was busy to the end, filling buckets with Thames water. "This", he said, "is the amount of tears that an average person cries during a lifetime. A fraction under 65 litres. One million eight hundred and fifty thousand drops. As far as we can tell, of all the animals in the world, only humans cry when we're hurt or upset . . ."

Shakespeare didn't think so. In the same scene as the seven ages of man — a linear look at life very like The Human Body — there is a wounded, weeping stag. *"Big, round tears cours'd one another down his innocent nose in piteous chase."*

On the subject of deer, I would take Shakespeare's word. We now have a statistic about scientists. They don't read Shakespeare. This programme was an introduction to the main show, as eye-catching as the parade which used to advertise a travelling circus. The show itself will range from a baby's birth to an old man, dying on camera. How much it is decent to see is a matter of opinion. I was not even easy in my mind about the line-up of naked people in this programme. The first and last thing we instinctively do to a human body is swaddle and shroud it.

There was an entertaining, Mr Toad-like sequence in which Winston drove a rally car, explaining the while how bright his brain was. "Although I've only been doing it for a few hours, I can do at least a bit of it on autopilot," he said and ran the car off the road. Off he jolly well went again. "My brain is now doing half a dozen tricky new jobs at once without my even thinking about it," he said. ("Lift off! Lift off! *Lift off!*" cried his whey-faced instructor. "Get your brain in gear!") Driving School? You can keep your Driving School.

Out of Hours (BBC1), like a clever developer, has found a neglected bit of acreage in the overcrowded medical profession. These are emergency doctors, on call after surgery hours. It seems they have their own drivers. (I wondered who that second man was. I assumed he was there to protect the doctor's virtue.) The drivers complement the doctors, who are in the usual emotional maelstrom.

There's the nice, grey, put-upon one, the one with curls and a fraught love life and the one who used to be Carol Jackson in EastEnders (trauma enough for any woman). This, too, was a roll-up, roll-up opening episode. A murder, a car crash . . . a bit much maybe.

Everything is a major new series. 10 x 10 (BBC2), bless it, is a minor series. You can't imagine how the heart rejoices over something short. These are 10-minute films from new directors. The Pawnbroker by Jo Roe was shot on Christmas Eve. Craig was popping his TV (it's disconcerting how many people find their TVs dispensable at Christmas) and Peter was redeeming his trombone.

A trombone sounds like a something sad with its foot stuck. You can see why Peter found it sympathetic. He has seen better days. "I was 10 years with the Co-op. I was, in actual fact, the Advertising Promotions Manager." He paused and sighed. "Until my career was laid to rest on the altar of someone's advancement."

Werner, who has lost some teeth along the way, had pawned everything to buy heroin. "Once you've tasted it, you can never regain your innocence." Or your electric drill, your video recorder or your microwave. Werner's mother, like Whistler's mother, sat and said nothing.

Classical CDs

Andrew Clements

Adams: Gnarly Buttons; John's Book Of Alleged Dances
Collins/London Sinfonietta/Adams/Kronos Quartet
(Nonesuch 7559 79465-2) £14.99

GNARLY Buttons is John Adams's clarinet concerto, John's Book Of Alleged Dances a string quartet. What they have in common, apart from the feisty technical challenges that the clarinettist Michael Collins and the Kronos Quartet meet spectacularly in their turn, is a fond celebration of the many strands of American culture. Whether in the spacious, evocative melodies and propulsive rhythmic juggernauts in the quartet, or the meditations on a New England hymn, slyly appropriated hoe-down and sweet, uncomplicated ballad that make up the three movements of the concerto, Adams is construing the world in which he grew up (he was a clarinettist in his youth) through his characteristic mixture of old and new, pop and art music. These are not major landmarks, but they are bursting with invention.

Pärt: Kanon Pokajanen
Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir/Kaljuste
(ECM 1654/55) (2CDs) £17.99

KANON Pokajanen is the Canon Of Repentance in the Russian Orthodox Church, a lengthy verse text in Church Slavonic consisting of nine odes. It's a source that Pärt has approached before in two earlier works, but here in this 80-minute unaccompanied choral setting he gets to grips with all its resonances. The writing is monumental, slow-moving and hieratic, so that the effect of the smallest shift of texture or harmony takes on an extra significance.

Stravinsky: Mavra; Symphonies Of Wind; Octet; Concertino
Kravtsova/Korzhenskaya/Makrova-Mikailenko/Martynov/Netherlands Wind Ensemble/Fischer (Chandos CHAN 9488)
£14.99

THE one-act Mavra, based on a short story by Pushkin, signalled Stravinsky's farewell to his Russian heritage. Like the other works on this disc it belongs to the early 1920s, when his music had already crossed the divide between the lush abrasiveness of his early masterpieces and the clean-cut formalism of his neoclassical period.

Bach: English Suites Nos 1,3&6
Murray Perahia
(Sony Classical SK60276) £14.99

PERAHIA'S Bach playing is sometimes expansive, sometimes much more incisively urgent but always projected with immaculate colour and phrasing. These are not performances calculated to appeal to the period-instrument purist — Perahia uses a modern piano and plenty of sustaining pedal and is never afraid to gild a melody with thoroughly romantic nuance. In every Suite there are things to admire, and often to marvel at. While there is nothing overtly muscular about his playing, each movement seems to be charged with rhythmic energy.

Drunk in charge

Richard Williams on the winners at the Cannes film festival

A BRITISH actor and a British director won two of the main prizes at this year's Cannes film festival.

Peter Mullan was named best actor for his powerful performance as a recovering alcoholic in Ken Loach's My Name Is Joe, while John Boorman received the best director award for The General, his version of the story of Martin Cahill, the Dublin crime boss assassinated by the IRA in 1994.

Mullan was said to be the unanimous choice of the 10-strong jury, which included the actors Winona Ryder and Sigourney Weaver, under the chairmanship of Martin Scorsese.

Aged 38 and a graduate of Glasgow university, Mullan has no formal theatre training. His earlier film roles include Trainspotting, Braveheart and Loach's Riff-Raff. At last Sunday's presentation he said he intended to share his award with Loach. His chief opposition was thought to have come from two far better-known names, the Swiss actor Bruno Ganz and the Italian actor-director Roberto Benigni.

Ganz stars in Eternity And A Day, by the revered Greek director Theo Angelopoulos, which was awarded the Palme d'Or, the festival's main prize. Set in fog and rain, an Angelopoulos trademark, and full of various philosophical inquiry and remarkable images, the film charts a writer's quest on the eve of his death to find memories of happier days with his late wife.

Benigni's film, Life Is Beautiful, received a much greater ovation from the audience in the Palais des Festivals when it was awarded the Grand Prize, in effect the runner-up trophy.

The best actress award went to Elodie Bouchez and Natacha Régnier, respectively French and Belgian, the joint stars of La Vie Rêvée des Anges, the first feature film by Erick Zonca.

The Jury Prize, a third-place award, was shared by The Class Trip, by the French director Claude Miller, and Festen, a Danish family drama by Thomas Vinterberg, both rooted in the theme of the sexual abuse of children by parents.

The best screenplay went to the American writer-director-producer Hal Hartley, for Henry Fool.

Cannes has been a happy hunting ground for Loach, who is revered more by audiences and critics in Europe than in Britain. My Name Is Joe is a story of addiction, romance and responsibility set in the backstreets of Glasgow.

No doubt Loach will receive some criticism for maintaining an interest in the margins of society, but this film sustains its dramatic value alongside its political dimension, which in this case (by contrast with Loach's recent work) is tightly focused on individuals and domestic situations. Comic invention alternates with the tension of a thriller, steering a shrewd course between the feelgood and miserablist tendencies.

Joe (Peter Mullan) is a recovering alcoholic who does a bit of decorating to supplement his dole money while sticking devoutly to his 12-step programme. His soul, however, is in his football team, a colourfully nicknamed bunch of enthusiastic incompetents. Joe, who is in his middle 30s, is too old to play, but coaches the team.

One of his players, Liam, is a young ex-junkie with a girlfriend and a small son. The girl has an active habit, and goes on the game to pay for it. When Joe meets the family's health visitor, Sarah (Louise Goodall), a relationship develops after he offers to decorate her flat. Sarah represents another step back to normality, and the scene in which Joe and his mate hang her wallpaper is one of the funniest in recent cinema.



Peter Mullan, who won best actor at Cannes, does some decorating in Ken Loach's My Name Is Joe

Loach handles the central relationship with great skill. These two very ordinary people seem to share nothing much, beyond average-to-decent looks. Joe simply has nothing, and no prospects either. "Joe Kavanagh, that's all I've got," he says. Sarah has a flat, a car, a job and common sense.

YET WHEN they meet, it's like two halves of a puzzle slotting together. Mullan and Goodall make their ordinariness shine.

There's a marvellous moment, before they've even kissed, when Joe looks at Sarah. She's silhouetted in a doorway, down on her haunches, talking on the phone. It lasts a couple of seconds. Nothing else happens. But Loach has found a way of showing you the moment when Joe falls in love. And being ordinary suddenly seems like the most desirable state in the world.

That's a good trick, because we want it to last while knowing that it can't. No one comes by happiness as simply and easily as this. Liam's failure to pay off his girlfriend's debts to the local crime boss presents Joe with a dilemma that imperils every aspect of his new contentment. By helping out, he would be stepping back into the darkness. But by leaving Liam to solve his own problems, Joe would be rejecting the only expression of community available to him.

Derek Malcolm adds: Roberto Benigni's Life Is Beautiful, a sentimental tragi-comedy, has carried all before it in Italy.

Benigni plays one of life's holy fools, who, in Mussolini's pre-war Italy, falls in love with a Jewish girl and is eventually taken off with her and her young son to a Nazi concentration camp. Separated from her but carrying the boy along, he makes elaborate plans to face the horror as if it were a game. This is to prevent the child from realising what is really happening.

Such a theme needs total sincerity and utter daring if it is to be carried off. Benigni has both, but the absence of true horror militates against the film, and I found the result marshmallowy in tone.

Another acquired taste is Tsai Ming-Liang, the Tiawanese director of The Hole. But he can do little wrong for me, even if his new film is even more hermetic than The River. This time he sets his scene in a permanently raining Taipei, where, seven days before the millennium, a fatal epidemic is on the rampage and a young man sits disconsolately in his flat with water pouring in through damaged pipes, and a hole in the floor through which he can see the woman in the flat beneath.

The film, made mostly using long takes, is leavened by the occasional appearance of a popular Taiwanese singer vamping to songs of what we can only suppose are the good old days. It sounds pretty hard going but Ming-Liang is such a good director that the film is strangely memorable.

Fear, guilt and despair

THEATRE
Michael Billington

ROBERT LEPAGE, the Quebecois magician, is very much at home with music. Kindertotenleider, his dramatisation of Mahler's setting of five poems on the death of children, gives the songs an emotional context without destroying their musical power.

Mahler completed this song-cycle, based on poems by Friedrich Ruckert, in 1904, three years before the death of his and Alma's elder daughter. Lepage's version at London's Lyric Hammersmith suggests it is both eerily prophetic of the composer's own experience and a universal meditation on adult guilt, parental fear and childhood transience.

Lepage presents us from the start with a ghostly image: a room filled with shrouded furniture. Silently, the white dust covers disappear to disclose a mother and her flaxen-haired daughter. They are packing up their books to go to America. But, as we cut back in time to see the mother rehearsing Mahler's song-cycle with her pianist and as the bookcase is backlit to reveal the deck of a ship, we sense something ominous. We know that the mother's difficulty with the songs presages death.

Lepage adds yet another dramatic layer by reminding us of Alma Mahler's injunction to her husband not to "tempt the devil" by dealing with childhood death. Almost seamlessly, the singer and the pianist turn into Alma and Gustav performing the five songs that anticipate their own experience. What is fascinating is how deftly Lepage switches between the historic past and the living present.

It also means that by the time Rebecca Blankenship, initially overlaid with a black mourning veil, comes to deliver the songs we are prepared for their emotional content.





Lepage: Quebecois magician

Manon goes back to the source

OPERA
Andrew Clements

THE heart of Manon is bleak and stonily unforgiving — the rise and fall of a naïve but vainly ambitious woman who is destroyed by the predatory society of Paris in the 1730s. But in Massenet's treatment, premiered in 1884, the pathetic tale is swathed in layer upon layer of fluffy, rococo decoration. The action is punctuated by frivolous set pieces, comic episodes that sit uneasily alongside the intense, desperate personal confrontations; and the score, too, flips between pastiche and music that is deeply felt and intensely truthful to its characters.

Getting that balance right is more than half the battle in any production of Manon, and English National Opera's new version at the London Coliseum manages the balancing act. In David McVicar's staging — his first at the Coliseum — the glitter and busy exuberance are there, but there's never any doubt about the dark cruelty they are disguising, while in the pit Paul Daniel switches between the froth and the aching, passionate melodies that well up from the depths with perfect aplomb.

If the costumes by Tanya McCallin fix the action firmly in the *ancien régime*, her permanent set, a curving, tiered gallery, has no period resonance. It's there to inject an element of voyeurism into almost every scene. Only the love duet between Manon and Des Grieux at the end of the third act, which is the linchpin of the opera, is spared spectators; otherwise they peep and leer from every vantage point, emphasising that everything in this seedy world is for show — and for sale, too, at the right price.

If the elegant surfaces are roughed up in this treatment, there's the occasional feeling that McVicar could have pushed even harder, made the satire even more savage. The sexual avarice that motivates almost everyone except the hapless, honest Des Grieux is suggested much more often than it's made explicit. Yet the public set pieces — the opening chorus of the first and third acts, and especially the ballet — are handled so expertly that this extra bite is rarely missed.

This production still sets the central personal tragedies into sharp relief. John Hudson's Des Grieux and Rosa Mannion's Manon more than stand up to this scrutiny. Hudson is a tenor who seems to grow in stature and understanding with every new role; here he wonderfully suggests a mixture of youthful impulsiveness, moral indecision and absolute devotion, while phrasing his arias in long, elegant lines and producing an ample supply of unforced, fresh tone.

Mannion artfully mixes in the weaknesses — the coquettishness and the love of the high life. She began nervily, but steadily found her confidence and more vocal security as the performance went on, until everything fell into place to create as memorable a portrayal as her Violetta at the Coliseum last season.

Every role matters in this show — Ashley Holland's feckless Lescaut, John Connell's bluff Count des Grieux, Anthony Mee's spiteful Guillot and a sparkling trio of good-time girls from Gail Pearson, Sally Harrison and Nerys Jones — and the chorus sing and act as though the evening depended upon them.

Out for a ruddy duck

Mark Cocker

THE white-headed duck is not a pretty bird. On seeing some recently in Spain I couldn't help thinking that they looked as if they'd enjoyed a long career in boxing. The male has a large bulbous white head, whose main purpose seems to be as a counterbalance to an equally swollen blue bill. The two together give it a magnificent ugliness, rather like the faces of some 17th century Hapsburg monarchs.

Whatever its aesthetic qualities, the white-headed duck is a wonderful symbol of Spanish conservation. From the 1930s this species crashed to a world population of just 19,000, spread thinly from Kazakhstan to Iberia. By 1977 the Spanish birds were down to just 22 and looked to be heading for extinction. But a concerted campaign by Spanish environmentalists have seen it expand today to more than 1,000, and they continue to spread outwards from an original Andalucian stronghold.

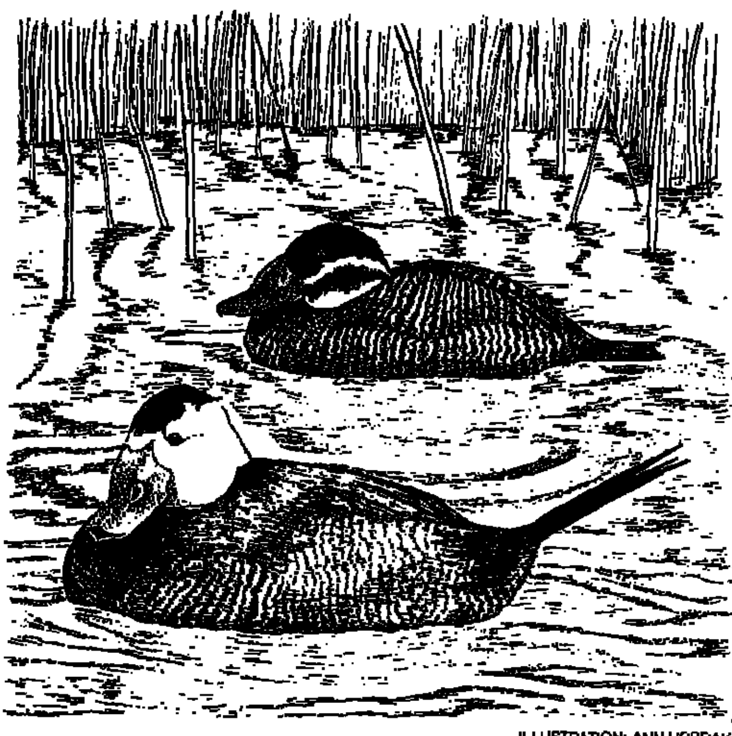


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Unfortunately, the duck is now encountering a fresh challenge, but not from habitat destruction, pollution, or over-hunting — the factors elsewhere that maintain the bird's presence on a list of globally threatened species. In Spain the principal threat is from the bird's New World counterpart, the ruddy duck.

Sharing the same white face, blue bill and sticky-up tail of its European sibling, the ruddy duck is an escapee from wildfowl collections in England. Over the past 60 years this expatriate American has built up a population of several thousand, and the British increase has been the prelude to a continental expansion.

The problem arises when these colonists arrive in white-headed duck country, because the two species readily interbreed. Being more aggressive and more flexible in its habitat requirements the ruddy duck has a competitive advantage, and the fear is that eventually it could genetically absorb its rarer relative and hybridise it into extinction — as happened in New Zealand where the indigenous grey duck was swamped by the introduced mallard.

To date only 50 ruddy ducks have been seen in Spain, but since 1993 they have turned up every year. There have also been more than 40 hybrids. These birds have been eliminated, the cull was complicated and expensive and the Spaniards' difficulties can only multiply as ruddy ducks increase.

Many argue that the answer, like the problem, lies in Britain, the main source of Europe's ruddy ducks. The Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the UK's foremost organisation in the conservation of ducks and geese, is one of the bodies prepared to contemplate a radical cull of British ruddy ducks in order to safeguard the white-headed ducks in Spain. On the face of it, this makes perfect sense. The British government is obliged through several European Union directives to help conserve European biodiversity, and the white-headed duck is one of the continent's most threatened birds. By contrast, the ruddy duck has a growing North American population of more than 600,000.

While the conclusion to be drawn looks obvious, not everyone can agree. The proposed cost of the cull is more than $160,000, and some argue that there are higher priorities for Britain's conservation funds. Others see the suggested slaughter of this "unwanted" alien as a kind of eco-fascism, and condemn the idea on moral grounds.

And while the white-headed duck is a symbol for Spanish environmentalists, some British bird groups have adopted the ruddy duck as their own emblem. All these conflicting sensitivities have confused the issue and brought it to a temporary stalemate. Meanwhile Spanish conservationists are having to patrol their wetlands each winter anxiously watching for the American invader.

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Chess Leonard Barden

CAPPELLE LA GRANDE in northern France is the fastest-growing open in Europe. Entries have quadrupled over a decade, and its 1998 edition had nearly 200 GMs and IMs among 637 players. Tie-breaks were used to split equal scores, just as well in a tournament where 29 players scored 7/9 or 6½/9. Russia's Igor Glek finished top of the heap with 7½/9.

You have to be a tough cookie to be sole winner in Cappelle, and Glek revealed in Rochade Europa that he has used the McCutcheon French as a surprise weapon since 1984 without losing a single game with it at regular time rates. Here Canada's No 1 is steadily outplayed.

K Spraggett v I Glek

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4 Black's McCutcheon Bb4 would be just as fashionable as 4dxe4 or Be7 if any of the top GMs played it. **5 e5 h6 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Ne4 8 Qg4 g6 9 Bd3** 9 Bc1, keeping the bishop pair, is also critical.

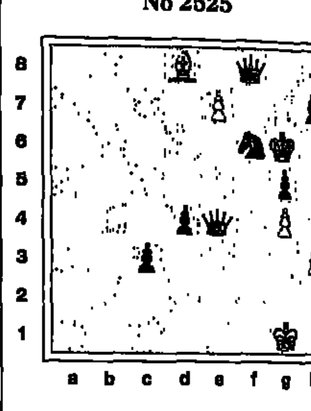
Nxd2 10 Kxd2 c5 11 Qf4 Bd7 12 Nf3 Bc6 13 h4 Nd7 Guards f6 against a queen invasion. **14 Rh3?! Qe7 15 dxc5 0-0-0 16 Nd4 Nxc5!** Not fearing 17 Nxc6 bxc6 18 Rab1 Rd7 when White's weak pawns matter more than the open b file.

17 Rb1 Qc7 Glek used Cappelle's mid-tournament free day to travel to a Bundesliga game where the world senior (over-60) champion Klovans also allowed the McCutcheon. Klovans varied earlier by 11 Nf3 Bd7 12 Rab1 Bc6 13 Rhe1 Qe7 14 h4 Nd7 15 dxc5 Nxc5 16 Nd4 0-0-0 17 Rb4 Qc7 18 Qf4 and now the two games are identical except that the white rooks are at b4 and e1 rather than b1 and h3. It's a better idea, but Glek won the other game too.

18 Qf6?! Rhf8 19 f4 Ne4+! 20 Bxe4 dxe4 21 Rb4. White's defensive formation is leaky. If 21 h5 gxh5 22 Rxh5 Rg8. **Rd7 22 Kc1 Rfd8 23 a3 a5** Even better is Qa5! 24 Kb2 Qc5 25 Nxc6 bxc6! 26 Rxe4 a5 with a winning attack.

24 Rc4 Qb6 25 Re3 Kb8 26 Re1? Better 26 Nxc6+ bxc6 27 Rd4. **Bd5 27 Ra4 Rc8 28 Kd2 Qb2+ 29 Re3 Bb3! 30 Rxa5 Rxd4+! 31 Resigns.**

No 2525



Max Euwe v Arnold Denker, Groningen 1946. It was round 11 of the first great post-war tournament, and US champion Denker felt well satisfied. He was tied third on 7½, had already drawn with the top Russians Botvinnik and Smyslov, and now had a winning position against ex-world champion Euwe.

Suddenly he felt a tap on his shoulder. He looked round at an apologetic organiser who said, "Mr Denker, there's a transatlantic call from your wife in New York". The news was bad: his rivals Reshevsky and Fine had convinced the US team captain Maurice Wertheim that they should take the top two boards in the coming match against the Soviet Union in Moscow. Denker had been humiliated twice on top board by Botvinnik in the previous year, and was looking forward to his chance of revenge.

Returning to the board, he moved instantly, blundered into defeat, and was demoralised for the rest of the tournament. In Moscow, Reshevsky beat Botvinnik in fine style on top board.

Denker played 1 . . . c2. Why was this a mistake, and how could he have won?

No 2524: 1 Nf3 Kxf3 2 Nf4 Kxf4 3 Be4 Kxe4 4 Qg4 mate. White's sacrifices force the BK to make fatal captures on adjacent squares.

Quick crossword no. 420

Across

1 Fortification, North England, built AD 120-123 (8,4)
9 Hatred (5)
10 Fault (7)
11 Midday (4)
12 Judgement passed in court (8)
14 Spain and Portugal (6)
15 Sacred Egyptian beetle (6)
18 Alcoholic appetiser (8)
20 Hurry — storm — emergency (4)
22 Opening (7)
23 Alliance (5)
24 From time to time (5,2,5)

Down

2 Fatty (7)
3 Incline (4)
4 The "Great" king (6)
5 Neuralgia of hip and thigh (8)
6 Foreigner (5)
7 Hung back (6,6)
8 Doing something unaided (5,2,5)
13 Courtesy (8)
16 Regular course (7)
17 Roman consul, writer and orator (7)
19 Chosen (5)
21 Polish — expert (4)

Last week's solution

S	Y	S	T	E	M		S	T	R	E	A	M
I		U		L				E		V		A
L	U	C	I	D		D	E	N	S	I	T	Y
E		C		E		A		S		L		H
N	E	U	T	R	A	L		I	S	S	U	E
T		M				M		O				M
		B	R	I	T	A	N	N	I	A		
S				M		T				G		P
C	O	B	R	A		I	N	S	P	I	R	E
H		L		G		A		A		L		N
O	R	A	T	I	O	N		U	N	I	O	N
O		S		N				N		T		O
L	E	T	T	E	R		C	A	N	Y	O	N

Bridge Zia Mahmood

SUPPOSE that this is your trump suit:

Dummy
♥ Q 8 7 6
You
♥ A K 10 5

How do you plan to play the suit for no losers? Of course, if the enemy trumps divide 3-2 there is no problem, and if they divide 5-0 there is no hope. So, concentrating on the 4-1 breaks, you cash the ace, on which both opponents play small cards. Then you cross to dummy's queen. If West shows out, you have a marked finesse against East's remaining J9, while if East shows out you must lose a trick — but you were always doomed to fail in that case.

Now suppose that when you cash the ace, East drops the nine. If this is a singleton, then you should next cash the king, since dummy's Q8 and your own 10 give you a finesse position against West's jack. But if East has dropped the nine from a holding such as J 9 4 3, then you will be defeated if you cash the king on the second round. What should you do, then, if the position arises at the table? The answer is not as obvious as it may seem.

In the Cap Gemini World Top Tournament this year, the following deal occurred:

West	North	East	South
	♠ A K 5 4		
	♥ Q 8 7 6		
	♦ Q J 2		
	♣ 10 2		
♠ Q J 9 3		♠ 8 7 6 2	
♥ J 4 3 2		♥ 9	
♦ 10 3		♦ 9 7 4	
♣ 9 6 5		♣ A J 8 7 3	
			♠ 10
			♥ A K 10 5
			♦ A K 8 6 5
			♣ K Q 4

The contract of seven of the eight tables was six hearts by North-South — not exactly World Top bidding, since both six diamonds and six no trumps are slightly superior, but the lure of the 4-4 major suit fit is all too often irresistible. The ace of clubs was an inescapable loser, so declarer had to bring in the trumps without loss. When South played the ace, East dropped the dreaded nine! Was this indeed a singleton, or was East playing a desperate false card as his only chance to create a losing position for the declarer? If you come across this trump suit at the local club, then I'd recommend playing East for a singleton when the nine appears from that hand. Unless, of course, he's read this column! But at the World Top Pairs, every East knows that the nine must be played from J9xx to give declarer a guess. And, since East will hold J 9 x x three times as often as the singleton nine, the correct technical play is to cross to the queen on the second round — just as if the nine had never appeared at all.

Only two declarers in the Cap Gemini event succeeded in their contracts of six hearts. Perhaps this was because they knew the correct answer to the question at the beginning of the column. You should tackle this trump suit by leading the first round from dummy. Now, if East has J 9 x x he dare not attempt to confuse you by playing the nine, for this would be fatal if his partner held the singleton 10!

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Football European Cup

Real grab final glory

THE European Cup that Real Madrid were beginning to think they would never see again returned to the Bernabeu last week after an impudent piece of finishing by a 29-year-old Montenegrin had punished Juventus for missed chances followed by a moment of aberrant defending, *writes David Lacey in Amsterdam.*

Predrag Mijatovic's goal in the 66th minute proved sufficient to bring Real the victory they deserved for steadily imposing their authority on a European Cup final which produced an absorbing contest of ideas and strategies.

As the game ended Juventus slumped to their knees and stayed there while Real danced on the podium in the Amsterdam ArenA, holding the trophy aloft for the first time since their predecessors defeated Partizan Belgrade 2-1 in Brussels in 1966.

It was Real's seventh success in this tournament, and the second defeat running for Juventus in their three successive European Cup finals. The victory guaranteed Real a place in next season's Champions League after their failure to occupy one of the top two places in Spain. Now Chelsea, holders of the Cup-Winners' Cup, will play them for the Super Cup in Monaco on August 28.

Last season Juventus, having been strong favourites to retain the Cup by beating Borussia Dortmund in Munich, lost 3-1 after making elementary errors at set pieces. Last week they were beaten after being forced to surrender an early initiative provided by Zinedine Zidane's skill and vision in midfield.

The basis for Real's victory was provided by a marvellous exhibition of positive defending. The goal came after a shot from Roberto Carlos deflected off a defender and fell kindly for Mijatovic with the Juventus defence wrong-footed. Showing remarkable coolness for a man awaiting his first goal in the tournament, Mijatovic dummied the goalkeeper, Angelo Peruzzi, before stroking the ball into the net.

International friendly: England 0 Saudi Arabia 0

One that got away . . . Gareth Southgate watches as the Saudi goalkeeper blocks his shot PHOTO: TOM JENKINS

England draw air of scepticism

David Lacey at Wembley

GLENN HODDLE was annoyed but the booing with which Wembley greeted England's neutral performance in last Saturday's scoreless draw against Saudi Arabia should have been music to his ears. There is surely no danger now of Hoddle's team entering the World Cup amid unreasonable public optimism about their chances of winning it.

Twenty years ago Scotland set off for Argentina as the massed tartan choirs sang, "We're on the march with Ally's army . . ." Ally MacLeod's side were swiftly given their marching orders.

Given the spiritual undertones of England's preparations the Hod squad might have left Wembley behind a Sally Army band. As it is, the last of their warm-up games at home has lent a healthy air of scepticism to English expectations.

After the Saudi result, the revealing 2-0 home defeat by Chile, the pedestrian 1-1 draw in Switzerland and last month's patchy 3-0 victory over Portugal, there should be no illusions left about England's position on the World Cup starting grid. As potential winners they are possibles rather than probables.

Yet Hoddle's squad have the ability to reach the quarter-finals and, if Michael Owen is ready to take on the world, they could go all the way to the final at Saint-Denis on July 12. Equally they could suffer the fate of the Norwegians in the United States four years ago and be on their way home before most people realised they had arrived.

The present England coach likes to keep everyone guessing about his team and his tactics, which is fine if you have something worth keeping under wraps. Owen, the young Liverpool striker, could be the ace up Hoddle's sleeve but, failing that, the coach does not have much else to spring upon the world.

The game here, far from revealing anything new, merely deepened existing fears about frailties in England's defence and midfield. Saudi Arabia, who reached the second round in 1994 after running Holland close and beating Morocco and Belgium (England's opponents in Casablanca this week), have clearly benefited from the Brazilian coaching of Carlos Alberto Parreira. With better finishing they might have won at Wembley through the speed and technique of counter-attacks launched from a solid defensive base.

Last Sunday Hoddle took his squad to La Manga more convinced than before of the need to use Paul Ince, unfit for this game, and David Batty in midfield to win possession and protect England's back three.

Under Hoddle, England away from Wembley have been at their best when the prime need has been to contain the opposition and deny them attacking space. If the exercise is successfully repeated in the opening phase of the World Cup then the match-winning qualities of Alan Shearer or Teddy Sheringham, Owen or Paul Scholes, could see them through to the next stage.

If, however, England go behind against Romania or Colombia, always assuming they have beaten Tunisia, then there was little here to inspire confidence in their capacity to turn either of these matches around.

● Scotland, the other home nation playing in a World Cup warm-up match, clinched a well-earned 2-2 draw against Colombia in New York, the goals coming from Craig Burley and John Collins. The game between the Republic of Ireland and Mexico in Dublin ended in a goalless draw.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Footballers face legal threat

WITH less than two weeks to go before the World Cup in France, the England team's morale suffered a jolt when the Football Association said it was prepared to take legal action to limit the commercial rights of individual players.

The current four-year contract ends in August and the FA's commercial director, Phil Carling, met the England players' representatives, Alan Shearer, Tony Adams and David Seaman, last week.

A new deal was worked out but the crucial issue remained unresolved: the right of each England player to enter into contracts with commercial firms for his individual image in an England shirt.

The FA wants to buy off the players' collective rights with a one-off payment, but the players are against the proposal. If the matter is not resolved in the next few days, players may find themselves embroiled in legal wrangles almost immediately after returning from their World Cup duties.

FOOTBALL'S play-off battles for promotion were fought out at Wembley. They saw Charlton move into the Premiership by beating Sunderland 7-6 on penalties after an eight-goal thriller failed to settle the argument in one of the most memorable matches of the season. The winning side's place in the First Division was taken by Grimsby, who defeated Northampton 1-0. The Second Division seat vacated by Grimsby was claimed by Colchester United, who triumphed over Torquay United by the only goal of the match.

THE Premiership is a picture of health, if crowd figures for last season are anything to go by. For the first time since the top flight was reduced to 20 clubs in 1995, more than 11 million spectators watched the 760 matches. The average gate was 29,189 — an increase of 2.65 per cent on the 1996-97 season. Manchester United proved the biggest home draw, with more than 1 million spectators going through the turnstiles at Old Trafford. Derby County recorded the biggest rise in attendances — up by a staggering 63 per cent at their new ground, Pride Park.

PAUL CAYARD and the crew of EF Language took second place in the final leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race as the yachts sailed up the Solent, improving their standing to take the Volvo Trophy by a massive 135 points. Grant Dalton, racing in his fifth Whitbread, won the leg and secured second place for his Merit Cup. Ten minutes after EF Language arrived, Knut Frostad brought home Innovation Kvaerner for third place and fourth overall. Swedish Match was third overall.

CHRIS BOARDMAN raced to victory in the prologue time-trial stage of cycling's Prudential Tour of Britain at Stirling — his 1.7sec winning margin over the American George Hincapie a clear indication that he is back on form after a season plagued by illness. Cheered on thousands of spectators lining the hilly, cobbled course, Boardman averaged more than 25mph. As if to underscore that he is a serious contender for first place when the race finishes in London on Sunday, the Merseysider won the first stage, which ended in Newcastle upon Tyne. It was only his second road race victory since he turned professional in 1994.

IRELAND'S triple Olympic gold medallist Michelle Smith is to face a disciplinary hearing after it was revealed that the potentially lethal dose of alcohol found in the A sample of her urine last January in an out-of-competition test was also found in the back-up sample.

Her solicitor, Peter Lennon, who watched the analysis of the sample at a laboratory in Spain, said: "It appears she will be charged with physical manipulation and not the use of any banned substance." The 28-year-old swimmer is expected to face a doping panel of Fina, the sport's world governing body, next month. Smith insisted she will fight any formal charge.

Golf

Monty pips big play-off with birdie

David Davies at Wentworth

ASK Colin Montgomerie which par-five, anywhere in the world, he would choose to play if he needed a birdie to win, and he would unhesitatingly nominate the 18th on the West course at Wentworth. The hole fits his game perfectly and in normal circumstances a four can be guaranteed.

On Monday, though, in the Volvo PGA Championship, circumstances were not all that normal. The Scot arrived at the 18th needing a birdie to prevent a four-way play-off involving himself, Gary Orr, Ernie Els and Patrik Sjoland — and he has one of the worst sudden-death records among the top players.

Moreover he needed that birdie to win the small matter of £200,000 ($326,000), unimportant in itself to a multi-millionaire but a huge factor in eventually retaining his position as Europe's No 1 golfer for a sixth successive year. He also needed the birdie to boost his position in the world rankings and, finally, to win the event he rates the sixth most important behind the four majors and the Players' Championship in the United States.

Far from being the easy birdie it often is, the 18th on Monday was almost Montgomerie's worst nightmare. The drive calls for a fade, and the Scot sliced it into rough so deep he had to take a wedge to hack it out. From there he had to get it up and down from 105 yards, and he hit another wedge to 9ft.

The putt, of course, then had to be holed and, in his words, he "pushed it just a hair". But it caught enough of the back rim of the hole to drop in, and a most unlikely birdie was achieved.

Montgomerie ended with a 14-under total of 274. It was his first win in the event and he was delighted, not simply because he had won but also because of the players he had beaten. "The most pleasing thing of the day," he said, smiling, at the presentation ceremony, "is seeing Ernie Els sitting there as runner-up."

The Scot knows all about that second-best feeling. The South African has beaten him in a World Match Play Championship final over this course and also in two US Opens.

Els, as he does, grinned genially. He had his chances to win, but wasted a shot in untypical fashion at the 13th. One of the great holers-out, he three-putted from 20 feet to drop a vital shot. He did hole from 18ft at the 17th to get back into contention, but his eagle putt for 14 under at the last, after a three-wood and seven-iron to 15ft, finished two inches to the left.

However, Montgomerie could not stop the Els returning to the top of the Volvo rankings, which, with £369,000, he leads by £61,000 from Thomas Bjorn of Denmark. José Maria Olazábal, who rounded off his eight-under total of 280 with three birdies, lies third with £296,000.

